REFERENCE LIBRARY

OF THE

WISCONSIN STATE COLLEGE

WHITEWATER, WIS.

No. 32549

Bindery MAY 14 1958

~~*Bought*~~ ..... *19*.....

Students of the Wisconsin State College are allowed to draw books for use in their rooms on the following conditions:

1. All books taken from the library should be properly charged to the student drawing them.

2. Books from the stacks may be kept two weeks.

3. Reserve books are to be used in the library during the day. They may be drawn out one hour before closing time at night.

JEFFERSON DAVIS

PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTH

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK · BOSTON · CHICAGO · DALLAS
ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON · BOMBAY · CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
OF CANADA, LIMITED
TORONTO

JEFFERSON DAVIS

PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTH

BY

H. J. ECKENRODE

E
487
E2
1930

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1930

32549

Copyright, 1923,
By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

All rights reserved—no part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher.

Set up and electrotyped.
Published, August 1923. Reissued, September 1930.

Printed in the United States of America by
J. J. LITTLE AND IVES COMPANY, NEW YORK

TO

ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE

THE DESIGN

Confederate history has been very unevenly written. Lee's campaigns are embodied in a considerable literature, while, on the other hand, the Civil War in the West has never received adequate treatment from the Southern standpoint and the workings of the government have been neglected. The present work is a study of the politico-military history of the Confederacy, practically virgin soil. Professor W. E. Dodd has given an admirable account of the earlier career of Jefferson Davis and Armistead Gordon has written an excellent brief biography from secondary sources; but not until the mass of Confederate correspondence in the *Official Records,* together with memoirs of participants, had been examined could the interplay of the government and the military leaders be determined. This has been done in the present work.

Philosophically, *Jefferson Davis, President of the South* is an effort to apply anthropological science to American history. Madison Grant, in his great work, *The Passing of the Great Race,* has indicated the path; this volume makes the application. There is no partisanship. The conclusions are reached largely without reference to political or constitutional considerations, but follow inexorably from the scientific theory which underlies the book.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	The Call	1
II	The Tropic Nordics	4
III	Jefferson Davis	29
IV	Mexico	40
V	The Triumph of Industrialism	55
VI	The Great Adventure	98
VII	The First Crisis	156
VIII	A Season of Victory	181
IX	Dilemma	194
X	The Great Crisis	210
XI	Downhill	238
XII	The Military Gamble	282
XIII	Wanted, A Cromwell	310
XIV	Catastrophe	331
XV	Why the Confederacy Failed	337
XVI	The Moral	357

JEFFERSON DAVIS

PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTH

JEFFERSON DAVIS

I

THE CALL

IT is an early spring day in the South in a town on a beautiful river—Montgomery, Alabama. A crowd pushes around a building on an eminence, the state capitol. It is a typically Southern capitol, rather small and dingy but with an imposing front of tall white columns, which, seen from the river, look classic and tasteful. The crowd is of the distant past—women in hoop skirts, many of them beautiful; men in black swallow-tailed coats, light trousers, stocks and broad-brimmed hats; negroes in homespun or tatters. It is an excited, voluble, jubilant crowd, filled with that sense of historic crisis which sometimes comes upon men, lifting them above the present and giving them a glance into the future.

Suddenly a rush of men and boys, with a few women, pours from the capitol building.

"The convention has gone into secret session," they explain to the waiting crowd. The doors of the capitol are closed.

Fifteen, twenty minutes pass while the excitement of the crowd grows in intensity. The people seem pleasantly excited: they laugh and jest. The negroes are quite as much

interested as the whites. Indeed, at the moment there is a camaraderie in the air which makes it hard to believe that some of the onlookers are slaves and others masters.

Presently the doors open again, creakingly. The crowd rushes into the building and floods up the narrow stairways into the galleries, filling them to overflowing. Narrow, uncomfortable, dirty galleries, but the people, in their intense interest, take no note of discomfort. They have eyes and ears only for what is passing in the legislative chamber below. It is February 9, 1861.

The hall is filled with delegates. The presiding officer sits on his dais, a grave, bearded man with a benevolent, intelligent face. He is Howell Cobb of Georgia, late Secretary of the Treasury at Washington, now a secessionist. Many of the men who sit facing him are likewise distinguished looking. Every type of the South may be seen, but a large proportion of the faces are high-bred and even noble. They are full of character and intellect. In contradistinction to the spectators, they are grave and almost apprehensive. It is evident that the moment is one of unusual importance.

The presiding officer speaks out clearly and deliberately: "The next matter before the convention is the election of a provisional President of the Confederate States."

The vote is by states—one vote for each state. Two tellers are appointed—J. L. M. Curry of Alabama and William Porcher Miles of South Carolina, well-known lesser lights. The tellers rise and visit one group of delegates after another, collecting scraps of paper. A single piece of paper is given them by each group: there are six ballots in all. The tellers, after studying the papers a moment, make a brief report to the presiding officer in low tones.

A tense silence falls on the hall as Howell Cobb rises to

his feet and speaks, slowly and with a certain painful emphasis: "It is my duty to announce that the Honorable Jefferson Davis of Mississippi has been unanimously elected provisional President of the Confederate States of North America."

A first handclap comes from the gallery, and then there is a loud burst of applause from spectators and delegates alike. For a moment the hall echoes with the clamor. Only for a moment. The next instant the gavel falls menacingly on the speaker's desk, and silence is restored. The body proceeds to the succeeding business. In such fashion is a new ruler given to the world.

II

THE TROPIC NORDICS

THE South thus severed the marital tie with the North. The separation was called honorable divorce by the South, criminal desertion by the North. In the end the South was forced back in the bonds of holy wedlock, though with certain mental reservations that obtained until lately. It did become bone of one bone and flesh of one flesh with the North in the end, being incorporated and assimilated. The military victory of the North was at length completed by the more enduring victory of ideas. The individualist, non-industrialist, unmodern South has come to think and feel as the group-member, industrialist, ultra-modern North. This is the real Union brought about by the shock of the great schism, the Union looked forward to by the storm-stressed, battered Union of those days, which bore on its banner through the strife the lost stars, the wandering stars, as well as the fixed Northern stars.

Wells has awakened the world to a sense of the reality of history: before our literary Columbus history was a tapestry of kings and queens, a gallery of armor, a rack of law books, a set of Meissonier engravings, a file of old newspapers. It was not that which the world used to think of its deity as being—anthropological. Our new history is anatomical, physiological, chemical, bacteriological, pathological, sexual: it has to do with lust, hate, malice, vice, virtue, disease, vigor,

guile, simplicity, ambition, indifference, thrift, waste, valor, cowardice, divine, devilish. History is only individual man multiplied a million times. Wells has shown us that.

So much for Columbus. What Vespucci will now bring life into the dry bones of American history? What penman will cease rattling the dead arguments of states' rights and nationalism, slavery and abolition, and show us planter and manufacturer, slave-owner and abolitionist "in their habit, as they lived"? Which of our historians will give up pleading for picturing?

We are the slaves of phrases. More than that, we are the helots of moral ideas, before which we bow down and burn incense. Perhaps we do not care to know that we are worshiping images, not realities. But we are. Let us get away from it. Let us give up the old, old business of twisting what has happened in the past into the proof of some pet theory, the justification of some maxim. Let us face things as they are, as if we were putting chemicals into test tubes for reactions. Let us accept the precipitate formed by pouring the passion of one side in a contest upon the passion of the other side, mingling the virtues and defects of warring parties as if we were dropping acid on metal. What difference does it make to us, grandsons and great-grandsons, whether North or South was right or wrong in the great controversy, or half right and half wrong? But it does matter that we shall know the truth, that we shall recognize the precipitate formed in the test tube of history for what it is.

There are two outstanding figures in American history—planter and business man. Before these colossi all our individual supermen dwindle into comparative insignificance. Our history is, in a small sense, the work of a number of men we can name; but, in its large sense, it is the creation

of many thousands of unknown persons who, indistinguishable cells, built up the coral frame of our civilization. The planter type claims Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Marshall, Calhoun, Clay, Polk, Lee—and Jefferson Davis. Of the business type are Hamilton, Webster, Seward, Lincoln, Grant, Gould, Pierpont Morgan, Rockefeller, Edison, Roosevelt, Root. From the beginning until 1865, the giants clashed: then business triumphed over agriculture, and the planter passed into history. This is the truth of it, though men make of our history a fight of St. George and the dragon, Ormuzd and Ahriman, light and darkness. Such moralizing is child's play. Like Nietzsche, we should go beyond good and evil and study the causes of history, which usually may no more bear moral labels than may germ cultures and entomological specimens.

Republic—who made it? A mob of valiant farmers turned soldier? A crowd of lawyers in a parliament? Two or three immortals? No; the republic was the work of the planters, of proud men who ruled on their own estates and disliked the thought of kings and nobles over them, of book-loving agriculturists struck with the grandeur that was Rome. Hamilton would have had a kingdom. The planters would not: they were for a republic, a Senate, two consuls—we called them President and Vice—and all the other trappings of the antique state to save which Brutus and Cassius died. Indeed, Patrick Henry cried, "Cæsar had his Brutus . . . and George the Third may profit by the example." The American republic was the precipitate formed by classical antiquity working on Southern imagination.

But the planters were too experienced and practical to seek to revive the conditions of antiquity: they were Cromwells, not Rienzis. They grafted on the representative in-

stitutions of England the idea of the Roman republic. But they did something more: they invested the antique republic with the spirit of eighteenth century liberalism; they made the republic the antithesis of the European state and the European spirit. They created the democratic republic. They reënforced it with the Calvinism of the North, thus combining the three mightiest forces the world has known—Roman republicanism, English representation and the most militant form of Christianity.

The planters were the super type of early America. Sprung from an energetic English strain, relieved by slavery from toil but not from occupation, stimulated by a large freedom from European control and by somewhat exotic surroundings, the planters were peculiarly susceptible to the liberal political philosophy of the eighteenth century. Being practical men, they were able to realize their philosophy. Liberals and yet not doctrinaires, theorists and realists in one, they were well fitted to bring into being the democratic republic. They initiated the convention of 1787, largely framed the Constitution and put the planter-general, Washington, in the presidential chair. The American experiment began to take form and substance.

But the republic was still in leading strings to Europe. The merchants and large landowners of the North, who were English in feeling and, therefore, not democratic, looked back toward the motherland. But the planters looked forward toward the unknown future. It was then that they performed their greatest feat, completing in the period between 1794 and 1815 the cleavage from Europe. They—or their leader, Jefferson—decided that the American republic was to go its own way in the world.

Through the efforts of the planters, and the Northern and

Western farmers who followed them, American democracy became established. It was not accomplished without leaving scars and without a certain deterioration in the planters themselves. The Tories of the Revolution had been dispossessed and their lands had fallen to patriotic small farmers, who rose from obscurity to be planters themselves. The Federalist planters lost power and in the South the Jeffersonian planters ruled—enthusiastic democrats who preached equality and, by way of practicing it, liberated their slaves at death. In 1794, Virginia was almost as Jacobin as France, though, fortunately, the Jacobins were Anglo-Saxons and masters, not Latins and liberated peasants.

American democracy was something new because it was a social philosophy and a practical system in one, and it had such exemplars as Jefferson and George Mason, that beautiful and harmonious soul. It was the tie that bound together the various parts of the republic, turning an ill-assorted confederacy into a country with a common consciousness. Before Marshall's decisions and the rise of nationalism, Americans found in Jeffersonian democracy the bond of union. New Englanders, Pennsylvanians, Carolinians, Ohioans, were Americans less because they were citizens of the United States than because they were fellow members of the Democratic-Republican party. The charm of the later South, the *ancien régime* of romance, has led us somewhat to forget that the planters were the first successful practitioners of democracy, the first practical upholders of the rights of man.

Jeffersonian democracy became the keynote of the republic: Dickens has satirized it immortally in *Martin Chuzzlewit:* "the Palladium of rational Liberty at home, and the dread of Foreign oppression abroad." Nothing is more certain, however, than that the natural man is not a demo-

crat. Only by special grace is man a democrat at all. American democracy was the product of an exalted mood. It was the flood tide of the great revolt against the Middle Ages and against medieval faiths—religious, political, social. The American Revolution has never been adequately studied on its social side. Socially, it was a surge upward of small farmers seeking to become planters, of dissenters clamoring to despoil churchmen, of demagogues ambitious to be rulers. The planters—or a large part of them—joined in the attack on the settled order of the world. They did so largely because of their hatred of England, but also partly because they were genuine converts to the gospel of Rousseau. They gave democracy its political success. Contrary to prophecies, the country did not tumble down about President Jefferson's head. Government had become the concern of the common man, and, thanks to the planters, it was a good working system. The planters ruled in a democracy by force of merit.

But democracy, politically triumphant, was not the moral re-creation it had been claimed to be. Democrats did not differ from those they had dispossessed. Human nature was not a whit less corrupt than before the Declaration of Independence. The brotherhood of man was still far distant. Laborers still worked twelve hours a day for the privilege of a Sunday of glorious intoxication; children died like flies in the factories that were springing up; slaves still sullened under the lash.

Furthermore, the rank and file of democrats were not true to democracy, even if the high priests were. The farmers who cursed monarchy in 1776 and derided Christianity in 1793 were comfortable planters in 1800. They had acres and slaves and they wanted aristocracy. In

other words, nature was asserting itself. Rousseau had prevailed over a natural Nietzschean order, but not for long. The Nordic instinct of mastery was arising out of democracy itself.

Besides, all the forces of the external world were rallying against democracy. Europe, half mad with egalitarianism in 1794, had swung far back the other way a decade later. The rights of man perished in 1815, in the smoke of Waterloo. Europe was caught in the full tide of the reaction from the French Revolution, and the "Altar and the Throne" replaced Rousseau. In the United States, the North did not feel this reaction, because of the economic revolution that was displacing merchant and landowner in favor of manufacturer, but the South came under its full spell. Jacobinism, atheism, egalitarianism withered like Jonah's gourd. From 1794 to 1820 was a far cry indeed.

Sir Walter Scott was the interpreter of this change to the South. Medievalism, now that it was dead, had become a beautiful sentiment, since it was no longer an ugly fact. Romance was born out of the sordid horror of the Middle Ages. The South became permeated with Scott. It read Scott; it talked Scott—so the phrase, "Southern chivalry"—it played at the tournament of Ashby de la Zouch. It ceased to be the Cromwellian South of the Revolution and the Robespierrian South of the seventeen-nineties and came to be the Arthurian South of the mid-nineteenth century. Not that democracy in the South was dead; by no means. It lived on and it resisted stoutly; but the fact remains that the body of the planters revived aristocracy despite the new industrial democracy that was rising in the North and the new liberalism which finally flowered in Europe.

The planters who were democrats in the nineties were hunting up their coats of arms fifteen years later.

The Scottian influence gave the South its peculiar charm, because it gave the South romance. It colored the life of the country. Without Scott there would have been slaves and slaveholders and broad, snowy cotton fields, but without Scott the South would have continued to be prosaic and commonplace, as it had been in the eighteenth century. The elements of romance were in the plantation life, but inspiration lacked until Scott wrote. He it was who, by acting on the imagination of the South, made it a dream island in the sea of modernity. He made it Walter-Scottland—a fairyland where young men saw themselves knights going to a tournament and girls were Queens of Love and Beauty rewarding them. Because the South was remote, rural, leisured, exotic, also Nordic, it became, by the grace of Scott, such a country as existed nowhere else in the world or had ever existed. African jungle in part; medieval Europe in part; American democracy in part—it was the strangest imaginable compound of ages and ideas and continents, and for that reason fascinating.

Partly for the very reason that the South was beautiful and singular it was in danger. The law of the pack holds for nations as well as individuals: it is perilous to be different. The world of the mid-nineteenth century was predominantly industrial and materialistic; and because industrialism was new it was very strong. In the eyes of the world of that day, with its factories and banks and public schools, its dull respectability, its new humanitarianism, its unreal rationalism, the South, with its cotton fields and slaves and patriarchs, was monstrous. A world made

un-Nordic by democracy and industry looked with hatred on the still Nordic South.

The South, strange land of Anglo-Saxon conquerors and negro slaves, had drifted out of the nineteenth century into another epoch all its own. Because of this it was overcome and absorbed by the North. The tragedy of the world is that commonplaceness is always defeating imagination: so Sparta prevailed over Athens, Rome over Carthage, the North over the South. It was the outdoor romanticism of the South and the practicality of the North which, primarily, brought about the antagonism that ended in secession and war.

The world does not understand the ante-bellum South. The South was, in reality, quite as new as it was old: it represented a certain spiritual change in the Anglo-Saxon race. That race is predominantly and characteristically northern: thus, in India and Egypt, the Anglo-Saxon ever remains a stranger. This is because the Englishman has England to look back to. But the Anglo-Saxon in the South had no other country to look back to from his subtropical environment: he was a law unto himself. Consequently, in the South the Anglo-Saxon was feeling the pull of the tropics; he was beginning to be tropical while remaining, in large part, Nordic.

America was mainly settled, in the colonial period, by Nordics. The Nordic race, which once inhabited all of northern and western Europe, is now most numerous in the British Isles. The distinguishing marks of the Nordic race are predominance in war and political capacity, together with the love of adventure. It took adventurous men to cross the sea in the seventeenth century and carve out homes in the forest. For more than a century the

Nordic settlers of the various colonies retained most of the racial traits in common. In the Revolutionary period, the South consisted of Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina. All of these colonies, with the exception of South Carolina, were really northern, not southern. But when the South expanded into Georgia and Florida and Mississippi and Alabama and Louisiana and Texas, it became really southern, subtropical. The Southerners of the border states were halfway abolitionists from 1790 to 1830; they would have abolished slavery but for the insuperable practical obstacle of having a half Anglo-Saxon, half African population with equal rights. They never grasped the modern solution of emasculating democracy, by means of which the Fifteenth Amendment has been nullified—a solution which, despite its hardships, has probably been best both for whites and blacks.

The border states were never easy in their minds about slavery. They protested too much; they treated their slaves so well that many of the latter regretted slavery after emancipation; they seldom plied the lash; they almost never killed them. It was different in the tropical South. There the Anglo-Saxon was a Nordic towering over inferiors. He worked his chattels; beat them; sometimes, though not often, killed them. He did not, like the border Southerner, who was part Northerner, almost believe in his heart that slavery was wrong. No; slavery was right enough to the Nordics in the tropics—in the rice swamps, the cotton fields, the canebrakes. Slavery was so right to them that sometimes they demanded more slaves from Africa, since there were not enough of them to be drafted from the border states.

The Anglo-Saxons in the lower South were becoming

tropicized; they were undergoing a transformation which might have had remarkable consequences if the Northern Anglo-Saxons had not abruptly halted the process. In other words, the lower Southerners were becoming adapted to tropical life as no Nordics had been for ages. Being tropicals, not temperates, the lower Southerners thought little of the doctrine of the brotherhood of man. In the tropics, the natural relationship is that of master and servant. White men in the tropics do not prate of equality in the presence of elemental inequality. Political cajolery is not the method of managing the masses in the tropics, but naked force. Hypocrisy is not a vice of the south, but of the north. It springs from cold, slow blood, not from ardor and passion. Thus, the Anglo-Saxons in the far South, by 1850, had lost some of their race characteristics while retaining others in stronger form: northern respectability and idealism were gone, along with northern sourness, hardness, avarice. What was left was Anglo-Saxon pluck, resourcefulness, initiative. What had been added was a towering race pride and an inclination to ride over racial groups considered inferior. The Southerner was a type as yet new in history: he was the one real creation of America. New Englander, Yankee, was but English super-shopkeeper; Virginian was but English farmer plus imagination and a sense of humor; but South Carolinian and Mississippian represented a distinct phase in human evolution. They were new.

The American and French revolutions were built on a dogma more nearly true than those of most religions—the equality of men. The equality of white men, while not absolutely true, has much of the quality of trueness. Change the clothes of the white aristocrat and the white proletarian,

and "handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?" Give the son of the successful plowman half a dozen years of cultivation and the son of the ruined country gentleman half a dozen years of poverty and neglect—and clodhopper and quality change places.

It is precisely this latent equality that led to the decline of democracy in the South. In 1776, democracy was railing at church and state, primogeniture, pedigrees, Tories: the mob of those on the outside looking in was naturally democratic. Then Tory lands were confiscated and sold for a song, and such an opportunity was offered for swift rising as had never been seen before. The small farmer democrats of 1776 were large farmers in 1786; their sons were planters in 1800. By 1815—to name a date—these had become gentlemen. Surely, this rapid development would have been impossible but for the substantial equality of the white people of the period. Presently the new generation of gentlemen looked down on their brethren who had lacked the wit or luck to rise. They had slaves and leisure, and so the new post-Revolutionary aristocracy came into being.

This in the northern South—Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, Kentucky. It was even more so in the lower South. In the lower South were both equality and inequality in a very high degree: there the bulk of population was not small farmer and planter, but white and black. Race was contrasted, not class—thus, the inequality was fundamental. Democracy does well enough where distinctions are artificial; it fails when differences are real. Social Contract, Declaration of Independence, rights of man did not alter the fact that a gulf yawned in the lower South between Nordic civilization and black barbarism. Anglo-

Saxon could change place with Anglo-Saxon after a few grammar and dancing lessons, but Anglo-Saxon and African could not become the same. Rousseau, Paine, Jefferson might burn incense before the great deity Democracy and whack tom-toms, but this miracle was beyond the power of their god.

Thus, while the North and Europe were becoming more and more impregnated with the truth of the utter artificiality of class distinctions, the lower South was learning to the full the terrible inequality between white men from the North Sea and black men from the Niger. Before this stubborn fact, theories withered. There was no question in the lower South of emancipation, but of getting more slaves—of stretching southward into the cotton lands and building up vaster estates. In the economic competition in the lower South, the less shrewd, less enduring, less energetic, less fortunate white men failed, and became cotton workers, not planters; but they had this consolation that they belonged to the superior race and, thus, were masters, if manless. Nordic degenerates they might be, yet they were Nordics among helots and, therefore, in an essential sense, aristocrats. Aristocrats often in rags and hungry, but still proud of their race. In the lower South the equality of the white race was very real.

This was the environment that formed Jefferson Davis, who was essentially a tropical Nordic, though modified somewhat by contact with the North. He spent the formative years of his life in the lower South; he imbibed its spirit, sympathized with and sought to further its ambitions, wore its crown. He also wore its crown of thorns and became its vicarious sacrifice.

It was because the tropic Nordic reached out after new

lands on which to work his slaves—or by means of which to earn slaves—that the American republic expanded. The Northern population had no wish to spread into the mysterious Southwest, where Aaron Burr, that eminently tropic Nordic, sought to set up his empire. The Northern spirit was intensive, stay-at-home, narrow, practical, efficient. The Northerner was the Englishman successful enough to be able to stay at home. The Southerner represented the Englishman who emigrates to other lands where success is easier. The Northerner, after tremendous struggles and by the exertion of such cleverness and energy as have never been shown before or since, overcame the great natural handicaps of America as an industrial center and founded the mightiest prosperity the world has known. The Southerner, emigrating from the worn-out lands of the border states, sought to build up in the far South a Nordic rural civilization.

Both Northerner and Southerner had great virtues. New England was the cleanest and sanest community in the world. New Englanders were business men, scholars, athletes, altruists; New England women were cultivated companions. Lower Southerners (when they were not excessively religious) were hot-blooded, genial sportsmen who would lend their last dollar to a friend and kill him for an ill-judged word. They were, in fact, partly mad, because they were Nordics baked in the sun, but it was a wonderful madness and better, in some ways, than sanity. Southern women were charming, if uneducated, and many of them were beautiful. With these divergencies, it is not to be wondered at that a rift appeared between the original Nordic race, as it was in the North, and the tropicized Nordics of the South which led to great consequences. This change in

the Nordic race—this new development in the hot lands of America, unhampered by European restraints—is the main cause of the Civil War. Constitutional disagreements were only symptoms, economic differences were but a secondary cause. The first cause was tropicalism, and the next cotton; and tropicalism and cotton found expression in states' rights and secession.

Without reflection, the lower South might seem to have been in the wrong, but is this so? The North won, or, to put it more plainly, *modernism* won in our Civil War. This victory seemed a real triumph of progress and enlightenment. Yet it was a defeat for Nordic tendencies. Industrialism won in the Civil War, and industrialism is as un-Nordic as agriculture is Nordic. The men who won the war for the North were Nordics, but they did not win it for the Nordic race. Ever since the Civil War, the weakening of the Nordic strain in American life has proceeded apace. The American nation is more and more becoming a conglomeration of the alien races of Europe and western Asia: it steadily grows less political, less individual and less masterful—that is, less Nordic.

The South has remained the only Nordic part of the nation. It has lost its individuality in being absorbed by the North, but its blood has changed little. If it had won its independence it must have become much more Nordic than it was, for it would have attracted Nordics from everywhere. In the ante-bellum Southern life the Nordic virtues were imperatively demanded: personal courage, masterfulness, reckless generosity. Indeed, in the lower South, with its great slave population, the Nordic race was not only developing but growing stronger, because it had found a congenial environment despite the non-Nordic climate. If

the South had won, there would have been in the world one thoroughly Nordic country, whereas there is none. Everywhere, in Europe and America alike, the non-Nordic races flourish and prosper while the master race declines.

Even before the lower South developed, the Nordic spirit of the planters asserted itself. A Virginia planter, George Rogers Clark, won the Ohio Valley for the United States. Another Virginia planter glorified what would have been, otherwise, a mere rights-of-man presidential term by acquiring Louisiana in spite of the protests of the North. Andrew Jackson, a small-farmer Southerner, crushed the Indians in the Gulf region and paved the way for the gain of Florida. Clay and Calhoun, Kentucky and South Carolina planters, tried to win Canada in 1812.

The attempt to expand northward failed, but there was nothing to prevent a stretch southward into Aaron Burr's dream empire. Here were plains capable of raising excellent cotton that were inhabited only by buffaloes and scattered Indians. Southerners, settling in these unoccupied lands beyond the Sabine, sought to bring the great Southwest under American control. These adventurers from Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana—Nordics beginning to be tropicized—looked first toward the acquisition of Texas, and later toward Cuba, Mexico and Central America. They dreamed, indeed, of founding a great Anglo-Saxon community in the tropics, supported by the labor of slaves or peons. It was a stirring conception, the aspiration of a dominant race. If they had had their way, Anglo-Saxon America would now extend from Maine to Panama, possibly much farther, and would include the greater Antilles. Such an expansion would have continued the power of the South for another term of years and might

have postponed the Civil War for another decade. But the North, which was unable to prevent the acquisition of Louisiana and Florida and which did not have quite the power to keep Texas out of the Union, finally was strong enough to block the efforts of the South to win Mexico, Cuba and Central America. American expansion was a half-completed work, cut short on the eve of its greatest triumphs.

The danger to itself drove the North to limit the extension of the United States, causing it to lose some of the finest lands on earth. The North of the thirties and forties, following in the footsteps of England, was engaged in turning the United States from an agricultural community into a modern industrial state. It was a phase of the mightiest revolution the world has ever known, by means of which the power has passed from the landowners, the squires, the slaveholders, into the hands of the manufacturers and financiers. In England the revolution proceeded bloodlessly; in the United States it was accomplished only through war.

What stood in the way of the industrial conquest of America was the tropic South. The northern South would not have blocked the game, but the lower South attempted to do so and, failing, sought to leave the Union and follow its own destiny. But the industrial North refused to allow the republic to be disrupted and its market to go glimmering, and so there came about the Civil War.

The North, with that shrewd Anglo-Saxon trick of putting an adversary in the wrong, called the lower South the Slave Power and its effort to maintain the supremacy of agriculture the Great Conspiracy. The term "Slave Power" mistakes result for cause. The proper name is the Nordic

South. If there had been no negro slaves, the development of the South would have been much what it was. A tropicized Anglo-Saxon population in the Gulf region would have preferred planting to mill-owning, would have attempted to extend farther southward, and would have defied the industrial North. Slavery has been too much glorified. It was but an incident in the conflict, the two determining factors of which were Nordic blood and hot climate. The Civil War was, in essence, a struggle between that part of the Nordic race which was prepared to renounce its tradition of mastery for equality, modernism and material comfort and that part of the race which was resolved, despite modernity, to remain true to its ruling instincts. It was a conflict between a community rapidly becoming un-Nordicized by industry and non-Nordic immigration and a community which had become more thoroughly Nordic than at the settlement by reason of slavery and purely agricultural pursuits.

Everywhere else in the world industrialism gained at the expense of agriculture as the non-Nordic race elements prevailed over the Nordic. This was not the case in America, even though a vast non-Nordic immigration was swelling the population of the North without aiding the South. In spite of the industrial tendencies of the age, the lower Southerners deliberately went their own way, careless of the censure passed by a wage-earning world on bond slavery. These planters of the lower South were the strongest and most original men that America has ever produced. They and the Westerners are the only Americans that are not part European.

So powerful were the planters that the North viewed with profound dismay their efforts to extend the United States

into Mexico. The North was waiting as patiently as a dutiful son waits for the demise of a rich father to inherit the political power of the country. Elementary arithmetic demonstrated that within a certain period the population of the North would, thanks to immigration, so far outnumber that of the South that political control would pass into Northern hands. For some years the North had owned the House of Representatives; it also desired the Senate. To secure the Senate, it had, in 1820, forced the Missouri Compromise on the South, whereby the South was prevented from extending northward by the exclusion of slavery from the Louisiana territory north of a certain geographical line running along the southern border of Missouri, which could not itself be kept from becoming a Southern state because it had been settled by a Southern population. Thus, the South would have only a state or two more from the Louisiana territory while the North would have many. The result would be that the South would be eventually outnumbered in the Senate, as well as in the House of Representatives, and the North would be able to pass protective measures necessary to its prosperity. Naturally, then, the industrial Northerners were dismayed when the lower Southerners threatened to acquire new lands to be made into new states to keep the North out of its just inheritance. No use to wait for a legatee who will not die. The North abandoned its friendly attitude toward the South, and the conflict over the admission of Texas inaugurated a struggle that did not end until twenty years later in the *débâcle* of 1865.

The tariff was only one reason among many why the North desired to gain control of the government and check the South. The North put its faith in modern European theories

and practices. It was one with Europe in placing emphasis on material well-being as the great attainable object in life. Humanity had abandoned its religious and political ideals, which distracted it so long, and had come down to an economic basis—an industrial basis. The South was the single exception in the civilized world. It was not materialistic and practical. It was drifting away from equality and the rights of man; from the tepid religion of the times; from Victorian commonplaceness; from the rather dismal civilization of the mid-nineteenth century, with its dull, conventional, ordered life. The South was drifting into the tropics, into a new environment. It was preparing to master and rule the mixed races of Latin America, to set up a great empire based on slavery or peonage—an empire which would have, indeed, a sort of equality, the equality of slave driver with slave driver and slave with slave. It was the most remarkable development of the Nordic race in modern history, but it was a development that ran counter to all the tendencies of the North. For this reason, an intense hatred of slavery arose in New England.

Slavery seemed to the North to be an immoral anachronism. It was condemned by the public opinion of Europe. Consequently, men argued that it must be wrong. The wrong-headedness of the South in maintaining slavery and the rightness of the North on the issue have become truisms. But at that time all the world understood the evils of slavery but not the evils of the industrial system. (Did we cast out the seven devils of slavery only that seventy new devils might enter it?) In the mid-century the North wore an air of complacent virtue; it was on high ground. The northern South—particularly Virginia—felt the modern condemnation of slavery keenly and was put on the defensive; but

the lower South, which saw no reason to apologize for so Nordic an institution, was enraged. As time passed, the modernism of the North and the Nordicism of the South came more and more into conflict, politically and philosophically, foreshadowing the military struggle. In a certain sense, the conflict was both offensive and defensive on both sides; but perhaps the North was right in thinking that the South was largely on the aggressive and itself on the defensive.

In the mid-nineteenth century the South was the most striking and individualist country on earth. It was something new in human life and a threat to Europeanism. If the South had prevailed over the North in the political contest that preceded the Civil War, the North would probably have seceded, just as the South did when it lost. The United States would have been profoundly changed. It would have been individualistic, militaristic, adventurous, given to the great outdoor spaces instead of to skyscrapers and offices. It might have been a much worse country than it is at present, but it would have been infinitely more picturesque.

In the forties the North and South were not unevenly balanced. The North opposed greater numbers to greater astuteness. Industrial North and planter South were politically deadlocked, each having one house of Congress, and both looked to the West to cut the knot. The West was agricultural and, thus, economically allied to the South; but it was anti-slavery and democratic and, thus, socially, Northern. Social forces prevailed over economic, as has frequently happened in history. But in the forties the West looked southward because it had no objection to the Southern scheme of annexing Texas and Oregon. At that time the

West stood with the South and brought about the acquisition of Texas.

By 1844 Texas had become the great issue in American politics. No more important issue has ever appeared in our political life, for the gain of Texas was but the first step in a plan that looked toward Mexico proper and South America. Texas so stirred the passions of the time that history, even yet, reflects it. Thus the annexation of Texas is still represented as a reprehensible act, and the Mexican War that followed as the result of pure aggression on the American part. Our historians have taken great pains to prove their country wrong. Yet the admission of Texas to the Union was one of the most beneficent and most necessary measures the country has ever taken. Texas, in the early forties, had become entirely independent of Mexico and was the football of European intrigue. Both England and France wished to annex it; but the Texans, who were mainly emigrants from the Southern states, looked to America. It would have been criminal negligence for the republic to have allowed this magnificent territory, eager to enter the Union, to become a dominion of some trans-Atlantic power. We should never have forgiven our forefathers if they had refused to accept the consequences of Southern expansion and declined Texas. Yet so strong was the opposition in the North to this extension of the American boundary toward the tropics that there was a distinct danger that Texas would not become a part of the republic. New England was awake to the danger to modern ideas of the rapidly developing lower South.

That Texas to-day is a state of the Union is mainly owing to the labors of three men, John Tyler, John C. Calhoun and Robert J. Walker. Tyler, an expansionist of decided views

and in full sympathy with the lower South, on becoming President of the United States at the death of William Henry Harrison, appointed Calhoun Secretary of State to bring about annexation. Walker's share was in making annexation a Democratic party measure.

Calhoun, the leader of the lower South, even now seems a great statesman. Alike at home in the Senate and in the cabinet, he reached a height of intellectual and moral preëminence such as few Americans have ever attained. He began his career as a nationalist in the War of 1812, but he changed his attitude when he saw that Northern industrialism threatened the planter South.

The main conflict of his life arose over the tariff. He brought about, in 1832, the "nullification" by South Carolina of the existing protective tariff act. But President Andrew Jackson refused to recognize the right of a state to void federal acts, and for a time there seemed danger of war. Then Henry Clay came forward to arrange one of his compromises, by which he kept the Union undissolved for thirty years. South Carolina gave up nullification and Congress reduced the tariff. The tariff continued to be reduced, from time to time, until the eve of the Civil War.

This controversy led Calhoun to believe that the South must unite against the North or fall. He had no liking for secession; what he aimed at was to make the South strong enough to hold its own within the Union. He knew that the planter South rested on slavery and that it could not afford to remain quiescent under the anti-slavery propaganda of the North. The South must expand in order to balance the North, which was constantly being reënforced by the non-Nordic immigration from Europe. Consequently, he had long hungered for Texas.

Calhoun's expansionist views were eagerly accepted by the younger generation of Southern politicians, who looked up to him much as his own generation had looked up to Jefferson. Yet there was a difference between the two men which measured the failure of planter democracy. Jefferson had fought for liberty and self-expression against the old order of Europe. Calhoun stood on the defensive, struggling to save agrarianism from the consequences of Jefferson's doctrines and the industrial invasion. That he played a losing game seems to have been evident to him, for there is a certain look of defeat in his sad Irish face, as we see it in the pictures. Yet he fought with the utmost tenacity to the last moment of his life.

Calhoun, together with Robert J. Walker, that atomy of genius, that expansionist who would not become secessionist, began to plan for the annexation of Texas and of Cuba as well. When Calhoun was called into the cabinet, he made a treaty with Texas for its admission to the Union. To the dismay of the annexationists, however, the Senate rejected the treaty, just as the Senate rejected the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations in 1919. The result was that the admission of Texas became the main issue of the presidential campaign of 1844 in the same way that the League of Nations became the main issue in the campaign of 1920. The Democrats nominated James K. Polk on an expansionist platform that called for both Texas and Oregon. South and West joined in an expansionist alliance. Henry Clay, the Whig candidate, attempted to straddle the issue, with the result that he was defeated. The American people preferred the average man who stood for the growth of the republic to the genius who did not know where he stood. Thus, the lower South, with its tropical policy, and

the West, with its eagerness for extension on the Pacific, made common cause against the North, the representative of industrialism and European civilization. The North preferred the loss of rich provinces to the extension of slavery—that is, to the Nordic empire in the tropics which the lower Southerners were building up and which threatened the North.

It was into this stormy arena, at this inspiring moment, that Jefferson Davis made his entrance. It was a singular coincidence that the leader of the secession cause appeared in politics at the very moment with the issue that made secession inevitable.

III

JEFFERSON DAVIS

BY another coincidence, Jefferson Davis, the Southern chief, was born in Kentucky, that meeting place of American currents, in 1808 at no great distance from the home of Abraham Lincoln, who was born in 1809. Davis, in later life, was something of an aristocrat, in obedience to the social law of his section, just as Lincoln, also in obedience to social law, remained a plain man of the people. It is one of the prime advantages of a republic that it develops an aristocrat or democrat out of the raw material, as the need is, while monarchies go on reproducing immemorial types with little deviation.

Jefferson Davis came of plain but good stock, of "poor but honest" parents. He was of Welsh descent and Pennsylvania antecedents, for his grandfather, Evan Davis, was a native of Philadelphia. His father, Samuel Davis, was a small farmer in Kentucky who had met with no great success in life when the future head of the Confederacy was born. The child was named after the reigning President in precisely the same way in which babies were named after him when he himself became a President. Beyond doubt, his name was originally Thomas Jefferson, but, like Woodrow Wilson, he dropped the Thomas, giving himself a sonorous and distinctive name. It had something to do with his success in life: men with ill-sounding names seldom rise high in politics.

The guiding force in Jefferson Davis's life, the influence that started him on the road to greatness, was his elder brother. Surely there has seldom been a more admirable elder brother than Joseph Emory Davis. But for him Jefferson Davis would have found his prospects in life very different. Joseph Davis was really the founder of the family, a business man of great ability who made a fortune in cotton-planting in a few years and raised the Davises from the small farmer class into the planter aristocracy. It happened, therefore, that Jefferson Davis, though a poor farmer's son, was not a self-made man: he had his path smoothed for him. To his brother he mainly owed his education and settlement in life.

The parent Davis was looked on by his family as a person of superior wisdom, but actually he was a failure. He wandered from Kentucky into Mississippi and across to the southwest corner of that state, where he found a final home. As schools were few in the Southwest of that day, the boy Jefferson Davis was educated in Kentucky at a private academy and at Transylvania University. Then his whole career was given a definite direction by an appointment to West Point which Joseph Davis secured for him. He was at the military academy with such other notables as Robert E. Lee and Joseph E. Johnston. Jefferson Davis was not a model student like Lee, hating mathematics and slighting his courses for desultory reading, but he graduated in 1828 with a fair class standing and carried away with him an almost pathetic faith in education. In later life, when the head of a nation, he hesitated to appoint officers to high rank who did not possess diplomas from the school on the Hudson. Davis carried away, too, a fair share of West Point arrogance. Once, years afterward, he was led to utter a

sneer at tailors while speaking in Congress, whereupon that very doughty tailor, Andrew Johnson, arose and rebuked him hotly, to the great amusement of the House. The incident was in keeping with Davis's West Point attitude toward life.

The young lieutenant, on leaving the military academy, spent some years in the Northwest and had some slight experience of warfare in the Black Hawk War. He showed his characteristics at this early period. On one occasion he was chased in a canoe by a canoe of hostile Indians; he rigged up a sail and escaped. This was a fine example of his high-strung courage and resourcefulness. But the rough life did not suit his sensitive nerves and a constitution enduring but not robust, and he nearly died of pneumonia in an isolated army post in a terrible winter. At length, weary of the rude frontier of the thirties, he resigned his commission and went South to become a planter under his brother's tutelage. Love, too, had something to do with this change, for Davis had become engaged to the daughter of his commanding officer, Zachary Taylor. The latter had taken a strong dislike to the lieutenant, not improbably on account of his preciousness, for Taylor was a rough, uneducated Indian fighter and must have been galled by his would-be son-in-law's probably too obvious attitude of superiority.

Davis at length triumphed in his suit and married the girl, but the romance was short-lived, as the young wife died of malaria in Mississippi within a year of the wedding. Fever also laid the husband low for a time. The effect of his wife's death on Jefferson Davis was very marked. Always a little inclined to seclusion, he lived a retired life on his Mississippi plantation for years, spending his leisure

hours in reading and in talk with his brother Joseph. The latter had given him Brierfield, a fine tract of land on the Mississippi River and sold him fourteen slaves on credit. The estate was virgin soil. Jefferson Davis cleared the land himself, working side by side with his slaves, and had in a comparatively short time one of the best plantations in the state. It would appear from this that he was a good administrator, though it is difficult to determine the exact extent of his business ability in view of the fact that he was under Joseph's guidance. The brothers lived on adjoining plantations, and Jefferson Davis profited by the advice and support of one of the ablest planters of the period. The rich land he had not won for himself made fine crops of cotton, affording him a good income. He eventually grew to be a man of some wealth, but never showed any great interest in money-making. His tastes and ambition lay in another direction.

For the decade from 1835 to 1845, Jefferson Davis lived the life of a planter, though not that of a typical planter. He was much in the open and his health, weak for a long time from malaria, improved from long horseback rides on flower-bordered woodland roads. His nervous system, however, never became strong, and he continued to be neurasthenic through the whole subsequent period of his life. In fact, he was a good deal of an invalid. His weakness was due, in part, to eyestrain, for he practically lost the sight of one eye by over-use. Going little in the society of the neighborhood and having much time on his hands, he passed whole days in reading, until he developed into a well-educated man. His favorite field was English history, essays and oratory. He also read Latin and Greek easily and browsed in fiction and poetry. Scott, of course, was

familiar to him, as were Burns and Moore, but he detested Milton. After the fashion of the time, he made an exhaustive study of the United States Constitution. In one sense, this prolonged period of reading was an excellent training for his career in politics, but in another way it was not, for he saw too much of books and too little of men and developed his naturally theoretical, idealistic, doctrinaire mental tendency at the expense of reality.

It is the misfortune of men that they follow the line of least resistance unless fate intervenes sharply for their good. In the case of great men this intervention is customary. They are great simply because they are forced to struggle against and overcome their limitations. Washington would have been merely known as a remarkably successful and close-fisted planter if a border war had not occurred in time to develop his military tastes and quicken him out of his somber practicalness. The Revolution transformed Jefferson from a literary lawyer into a world figure. It was the lot of Jefferson Davis not to be forced by destiny to overcome his faults. What he needed was rough contact with life; what he did for too long a period was to live as a recluse.

In the decade on the plantation, his character developed so fully that there was no notable change for the rest of his life. He had grown from a nervous, high-strung boy into a sensitive though self-contained man. He had no lack of pluck, but he disliked the army and left it. In his solitary plantation life he was able to indulge his egoism, and his keen responsiveness to suggestion grew into a sort of neurosis. In the Senate, and afterward as President, he was a martyr to neuralgic headaches, which completely prostrated him at times. If he had not had a most powerful will, he

would have become a valetudinarian idler, since he was not obliged to struggle for a living; but his will redeemed him and made the neurasthenic one of the foremost men of his day. Indeed, Jefferson Davis possessed the genius combination—neurosis and will. This is the combination that made Cæsar, Cromwell and Napoleon. What he lacked that they had was a strong sense of reality. Cæsar, Cromwell and Napoleon were all anti-theorists and men of action: Jefferson Davis was a doctrinaire who would never have ventured into the life of action at all but for his overpowering ambition.

He was a soldier whose ambition was inspired by war but who did not much like fighting for fighting's sake. The army when he belonged to it was a paradise for adventurers, for the Far West of those days was the enchanted land of Indians and buffaloes of which every boy dreams. But Davis passed from the army and adventure, probably because the army in the thirties seemed to offer little opportunity to an ambitious man, and he was very ambitious. In fact, he was almost altogether ambition. Turned from the career of a military conqueror, on which his boyish fancy had fed, by the lack of opportunity—since there must be war before there can be conquerors—Jefferson Davis looked toward the other sphere open to ambition, and always open, that of politics. His line of reading indicates that he deliberately prepared himself for political life and then, when he felt himself ready, made the plunge. His choice was, in one sense, wise. If he had remained a soldier, he would probably have never risen to greatness. As a politician, he came to be one of the foremost figures in American history.

It should be noted that at this time, and in America,

literature was not a field for ambition. Although Cooper, Irving and Hawthorne were producing a real literature, they were largely unconsidered pioneers. The imagination of the American of that day was not fired by the thought of a literary career: it dwelt on war and politics. If Davis had lived in our time, he would probably have become a writer instead of a politician, or at least a writer-politician. But living when he did, he chose the road that appealed to his large ambition. Abandoning his quiet life on his rich plantation—a life which for ease, independence and opportunity for happiness has been rarely equaled on earth—he took up the cross of politics, exchanging comfort and leisure for labor, anxiety and detraction.

In his long period of seclusion and preparation for politics, Jefferson Davis did one notable thing: he perfected on his own plantation the institution of slavery. That is, he placed the relation of master and bondman on the basis of justice; he was in fact, as well as in theory, the father of his servants. His slaves were exceedingly well-cared for and remarkably trained. Capable negroes were trusted in a high degree. No corporal punishment was allowed on the plantation except by the judgment of a negro jury, which sat on all offenses against the rules of the place. The negroes were happy and remained devoted to Davis through their whole lives; he was on terms of almost intimate friendship with some of them. If all slave-owners had employed the methods of Jefferson Davis, slavery would have had just claims to be considered a beneficent institution. No doubt, Davis's exceptional treatment of his chattels was partly due to his sensitiveness, which shrank with more than womanly repulsion from the sight of pain. Yet it is likely that his methods were also due in part to propagandist pur-

poses. Davis was a champion of a bitterly assailed institution, and he must have desired to present slavery to the world in the best possible light. He succeeded amazingly. His plantation was a model, and his well-trained negroes remained steadily at work amidst the demoralization of war and during the occupation of the country by the enemy. After the close of the war, his ex-slaves were pointed out as examples of what slaves might become when freed: the eulogists did not know that the freedmen merely exemplified the admirable discipline possible under slavery.

If Jefferson Davis had remained in the army, his development would have been very different. But living his solitary life on his little barony, influenced by literature on one hand and by his semi-tropical surroundings on the other, he became the political champion of the lower South and the leader of the tropicalized planters, who looked more and more longingly toward golden Mexico. It is difficult for Northerners to comprehend the influences that molded him: his isolation in the sun-baked country along the Mississippi, amidst cotton fields and negro villages; the free, half-wild life; the utter lack of city contacts and modernity; responsibility and the habit of command; tropic barbarism acting on Nordic blood. If Jefferson Davis had not entered politics and spent much of his time in Washington, he would have become a typically overbearing, passionate lower South planter. As it was, he left his isolation in time to save himself from provincialism and yet not soon enough to keep the tropics out of his soul. His life for a decade was such as cannot be paralleled on earth nowadays. He rode day after day through his cotton fields, oblivious of the outside world. For relaxation, he went alligator-hunting in backwaters of bayous or dallied in the azalea-perfumed outdoors, dream-

ing. Thus the proud, solitary, sensitive, imaginative soul of Jefferson Davis grew to maturity.

If he had been less ambitious and resolute, he would have gone on to the end as a student and spectator of life: that was his natural tendency. But ambition and a restlessness that came from partially restored health stirred him at last out of an existence that might have degenerated into mere lotos-eating. It is difficult for us of the present time, accustomed as we are to the political deadness of the modern South—that stamping ground of politicians without policies—to understand the vigorous public life in the lower South before it was blasted, once for all, by the slavery issue. Mississippi was for some years evenly divided between the Whig and Democratic parties, and in Sargent Prentiss, John A. Quitman, Robert J. Walker, Henry S. Foote, A. G. Brown and Jacob Thompson the state boasted a group of politicians second to none in the country if it did not actually surpass any other. Thus it was a notable company that Jefferson Davis joined. Mississippi, politically, followed the line of division throughout the South: the large slaveholders, the aristocrats, were mostly Whigs; the small farmers, Democrats. Now, Jefferson Davis was a Democrat and at the same time a prosperous planter; moreover, he was a Democrat in a largely Whig section. For these reasons his entry into politics attracted attention.

The period was one of recovery after the panic of 1837. Mississippi had sold bonds in large quantities in order to build railroads and presently found itself confronted by the choice of levying heavy taxes to pay interest or of repudiating the debt. The Democratic state government took the easier way, in spite of Whig opposition, and Mississippi was dishonored. Jefferson Davis strongly urged payment and

recommended himself to the Whigs by his stand for honesty: there can be no doubt of his record. Nevertheless, the United States government, years later, sent Robert J. Walker to Europe for the purpose of representing the President of the Confederacy in the money marts of the world as a repudiator, much to his injury. Even after the war, the slander was cast in his teeth. Davis met it with proud silence, wisely leaving his vindication to history. That vindication has been complete.

In 1843, Jefferson Davis made his first stand for office, running for the legislature against Sargent Prentiss, who was probably second only to Webster as an orator. Prentiss beat the newcomer, as was to be expected, and yet Davis made an auspicious beginning, for in a joint debate with Prentiss at Vicksburg he held his own.[1] The next year, 1844, Davis stumped his state as a Polk elector. Already he was a fine speaker—a debater rather than orator, though at first he somewhat affected the florid fashion of the hour. This mood passed; and it is notable that in an age of silver-tongued eloquence he developed into a master of argument. Not particularly ready in extemporaneous discussion, he was admirable when given time for preparation, and on the floor of the Senate he held his own against all comers.

Jefferson Davis entered office in 1845 as a member of the House of Representatives: he was elected as a congressman-at-large. His career in Congress was interrupted by the Mexican War, in which he took part. In this first brief experience as a member of a legislative body he gave considerable promise.

The same year, 1845, was notable in the life of Jefferson Davis in another way. It seemed that the man, crushed

[1] W. E. Dodd, *Jefferson Davis*, 65.

in spirit by the death of his wife and ruined in health by malaria, revived his hopes of happiness at the same moment on which he entered on his career. He married a second wife, Varina Anne Howell, the daughter of a rich Mississippi planter.

Like so many other lower Southerners, the Howells had come from the North. They had acquired a fine plantation and ranked with the most cultivated people of a state that did not lack culture, becoming thoroughly assimilated. At the same time, they retained some of their original Northern traits. Thus, the women of the family seem to have been good cooks and housekeepers at a time when Southern ladies usually did not do much work.

Varina Anne Howell was attractive in looks and clever. Unlike her husband, who was through life thin and unrobust, she was strong and full-blooded: Pollard calls her "brawny." She was rather handsome, though her features were slightly marred by a thick upper lip which gave her, unjustly, a slight suggestion of cruelty. It was a smooth, proud, comely face. There can be no doubt that Varina Davis was a congenial companion for an intellectual man and that she secured a considerable influence over her husband, even possibly in political matters. Her abounding vitality would have made her predominant over the semi-invalid Davis but for a will which always kept him master of himself. He was not to be put in leading strings by anyone.

Jefferson Davis, by his second wife, had a number of children, all but two of whom died before maturity. Both were girls and only one left descendants. As in the case of so many other men who have occupied great positions, Jefferson Davis left no one to bear a name immortalized in history.

IV

MEXICO

THAT truly Nordic spirit, James K. Polk, immediately on his inauguration went to work to attempt to redeem his expansionist pledges. Texas had been admitted to the Union, by joint resolution of Congress, before Polk's advent, but the question of the Texan boundary remained unsettled and Oregon loomed up as a vast and threatening problem.

There was danger of war with Mexico over the Texan boundary and with England over the division of Oregon. A compromise was made with England in the case of Oregon by which the United States renounced "Fifty-Four Forty or Fight" and accepted Forty-Nine and Peace. The Mexican question was not compromised. Texas claimed the Rio Grande as the boundary, and when Mexico refused to admit this war resulted. Polk had no desire for war, but he was no diplomatist and Mexico was stupidly truculent, with the truculence of a weaker race laboring under a sense of injustice.

Fighting began when American troops advanced to the Rio Grande. Calhoun, who as Secretary of State had labored to acquire Texas without war, denounced this forward movement of the government, but for once his disciples deserted him. His principal lieutenants in Congress were Robert Barnwell Rhett of South Carolina and William L.

Yancey of Alabama. These younger men favored war in 1846 as ardently as Calhoun himself had in 1812. So did the Western and many of the Northern Democrats. Stephen A. Douglas, the rising young Western Democratic leader, advocated war along with the Southern fire-eaters. Jefferson Davis, who had strongly favored the annexation of Texas, supported the administration in its war policy. The Whigs, Northern and Southern, joined Calhoun in opposing it.

The stand of Calhoun against the Mexican War is noteworthy, for it has been the fashion of historians to ascribe that war to the aggression of the Slave Power on a weaker nation, and Calhoun was the leader of the Slave Power, so called. The Mexican War was really the result of the Nordic thirst for conquest; and Nordics—Northern, Western and Southern—favored it. The adventurous and aspiring portion of the people of all sections except New England demanded expansion into the mysterious and mainly unoccupied Southwest. Yet the strongest force, undoubtedly, was that of the lower South reaching out toward the tropics. Calhoun represented the agricultural South battling against the industrial North: he did not represent the new spirit of the lower South, intent on fulfilling its destiny even at the price of separation from the North. For this reason Calhoun found himself isolated in the last years of his career: the lower South had gone beyond him.

The historians, in their desire to make out a case against the United States—for the historians represent the Northern fear of the Southern extension into the tropics—have given the impression that Mexico was a civilized nation. It could be called so only by courtesy. The mass of the inhabitants were Indians not much farther advanced in civilization than their Aztec ancestors. It is true that Mexico had abolished

slavery, and this was hailed by the North as a proof of advanced collective morality; but emancipation, so far from benefiting the country, had actually injured it, for a once useful class of workers had become idlers. Peonage took the place of slavery and was, in some respects, worse, as it conferred the name of freedom without the reality. Yet if it had not been for peonage, Mexico would have frankly relapsed into barbarism. It styled itself a republic, save at such times as it happened to be an empire, and it had adopted one admirable paper constitution after another; but in reality it was in a condition of chronic anarchy except for brief periods when some bandit or military adventurer was able to make himself autocrat. There was no particular reason why the United States should hesitate to extend its sway over the country between the Nueces and the Rio Grande on account of the claims of sovereignty of a country so disorganized, feeble and distracted as Mexico. Naturally, it preferred to back Texas. To be weak is to be wrong —and justly so: otherwise there would be no virtue in being strong. Yet it is probable that if Calhoun had continued in the State Department under Polk the territory in dispute would have been gained without war, for Calhoun was almost the only great diplomat the United States has produced. Polk and Buchanan could not bend his bow, and because they could not the Mexican War occurred.

It was inevitable that Jefferson Davis should take part in the war. He had supported Polk's policy in spite of Calhoun, and, besides, his education and ambition called him to the field. His first love, military ambition, had given way to politics in the long interval of peace, but it now revived. Davis, resigning his seat in Congress, went back to Mississippi to offer his services. He was elected colonel

of the first regiment raised in that state for the war, known as the "Rifles."

It was Jefferson Davis's fate to be attached to the army commanded by his father-in-law, Zachary Taylor. The latter was one of the most remarkable of generals. He had been trained in fighting Indians on the frontier and was a practical soldier, not theoretical. Dirty in person, uneducated, eccentric, he was yet a great natural leader of men and exceedingly popular with his soldiers. He blundered into victories in an amazing way, and all of his battles were victories. In most respects he was the reverse of Jefferson Davis, which possibly explains his objection to the latter as a son-in-law. Rough and practical, Taylor had a natural distaste for West Point fastidiousness and airiness, which Davis exemplified in early life. Now that he had lost some of his West Pointism by planting and politics, Taylor found him much more to his liking and actually grew fond of him.

Jefferson Davis showed considerable initiative as a soldier in the Mexican War. While the rest of the army continued to rely on "Brown Bess," he put a new rifle in his regiment which increased its efficiency. It was a superb regiment, composed chiefly of well-to-do planters, who were accompanied by their own servants. About September 1, 1846, the command reached the front in Mexico and soon saw service. Taylor attacked the town of Monterey, held by a large force of Mexicans. Davis and the Rifles played a conspicuous part in the storming of the enemy's works. The Mexicans at length withdrew from Monterey, leaving the victory with Taylor.

For some time afterward he was kept inactive for want of troops. Early in 1847, however, he was reënforced and resumed his advance. Santa Anna, the Mexican president and

army commander, a rather scatter-brained adventurer in gaudy uniform, suddenly moved northward against Taylor with a considerable army. The two forces met at Buena Vista, where the most spirited action of the war took place. The Mexicans were in such superior force that for once they had a chance to win.

The Americans held a position along the edge of a series of deep ravines at the base of a mountain. The Mexicans, charging, occupied this mountain before the Americans, thus gaining the initial advantage. They then sought to get in the rear of the Americans by an attack on their wings beyond the ends of the ravines. It was like a battle in a picture book. Against the background of the cactus-covered desert, under the brilliant sunshine of Mexico, stood the somber and immobile line of American riflemen, mostly in frontier garb. In front stretched dense masses of Mexican infantry and close squadrons of cavalry, clad in bright uniforms of every hue—green, yellow, crimson, blue—while the wind brought to the invaders the music of the Mexican bands, made hauntingly sweet by distance.[1]

For some time the battle was hotly fought. The Mexicans pressed the Americans hard on the left wing, though the American artillery, admirably handled, told terribly on the massed assailants. At the point held by the Mississippi Rifles, the Mexican cavalry attempted a flanking movement up one of the ravines. Davis, throwing out his regiment around the end of the ravine in the form of an obtuse angle, poured a converging fire into the column of approaching horsemen. In a moment the ravine was choked with dying men and beasts: the charge was broken with dramatic suddenness. The most serious fighting of the day, however,

[1] Justin H. Smith, *The War with Mexico*, I, 389.

occurred on the right wing, where the Americans were likewise successful. The battle ended with the repulse of the Mexicans at every point.

The defeat of the cavalry charge was a spectacular feat, as a result of which fame came to Jefferson Davis. He was regarded as a soldier genius, second only to Taylor and Scott. Yet, as a matter of fact, his actual battle experience was limited to Monterey and Buena Vista. That he did well is undeniable, but no man can demonstrate great military ability as a regimental commander in two small engagements. The main exploit of the war was Scott's march to Mexico City, and the officer who did the best work in this was Robert E. Lee, Scott's chief engineer. But Lee had no such dramatic experience as the stand at Buena Vista, and the crowd judges men largely by dramatic incidents. Thus Jefferson Davis returned from the war with a reputation that was perhaps somewhat exaggerated. The applause was so great that he was deceived himself. He was looked on in the South as a great soldier and he was firmly convinced of his own military talents. His war service was destined to be decisive of his future. It put him in the Senate and made him President of the Southern Confederacy. When the Richmond *Examiner* near the close of the Civil War said, "If we are to perish, the verdict of posterity will be, Died of a V," [1] it was commenting bitterly on the consequences that had flowed from the famous obtuse angle of Buena Vista.

As might be expected, Davis was crowned at home with laurels. He was an interesting hero, too, for he limped on a crutch, the result of a wound in the foot received at Buena Vista. Prentiss, his sometime rival, eulogized him with his

[1] January 9, 1865.

matchless rhetoric, and the Rifles were toasted from one end of the state to the other. It was an hour of triumph undarkened by any premonitions of the future.

Davis soon experienced the political benefits of military glory. In his brief career in the House of Representatives he had been promising, but nothing more. Yet now, as a result of Buena Vista, the governor of Mississippi appointed Jefferson Davis to fill an unexpired term in the Senate, and the legislature presently elected him for six years. Thus he gained a political promotion that would, otherwise, have probably come only after years of service. In a sense this rapid rise was a misfortune. Up to the great hour of his life, fate was very kind to Jefferson Davis. On leaving the army, he found a plantation awaiting him. Entering politics in 1843 as the merest amateur, he was a senator in 1847. Reëntering the army in 1846, he speedily became one of the country's most famous soldiers. When he left the Senate, he was given a place in the cabinet. Every step was upward, to better things. It is not to be wondered at, then, that Davis gained a self-confidence that was as much the fruit of good fortune as of merit. Merit there was, and much merit, but men as meritorious as he have fared far worse. He would have been a greater man if he had had to win his way by hard knocks, as Lincoln did. He had too much success and praise. Naturally, he came to overestimate his powers. Successful men are always willing to believe that success is the test of merit.

Jefferson Davis took his place in the Senate at the beginning of a period. The great figures, Webster, Clay and Calhoun, were nearing the end: the men of the Civil War were coming on the scene. The Senate, however, was still a dignified institution where the older members wore black

shorts and silk stockings and where the auditors in the gallery still listened to ponderous eloquence in naïve admiration. Modern irreverence had not yet touched the Senate.

By this time the fighting in Mexico was over; the more troublesome and dangerous matter of peace terms occupied the stage. The opportunity was so great that the bolder spirits were prepared to grasp it. Mexico had fallen at a blow, like a hollow image. Its entire absorption was practicable. Understanding this, the great expansionist, Robert J. Walker, was urging its annexation. He wanted the entire country and he won over to his views James Buchanan, Secretary of State. In January, 1848, the acquisition of all Mexico seemed pretty well assured.[1]

Yet the scheme failed. Why? Why did the Southern expansionists, eager as they were to push into the tropics, fail to support Walker at this favorable moment and forbear to bring such pressure to rest on Polk as he could not have resisted? It was one of the great hours of American history, but it was allowed to pass unimproved.

A new slavery controversy defeated the Nordic grasp at conquest. The South witnessed with anger and dismay a bold effort of the North to snatch from it the advantages won by Southern initiative and Southern blood. The North had done little in the war; nearly all the volunteers had been Westerners and Southerners; the leading figures, Taylor, Scott, Quitman, Wool, Worth, Davis, were Southerners. It had been a war waged for Southern expansion. Yet late in 1846, the Wilmot Proviso was launched in Congress for the purpose of taking from the South the new territory to be gained: the Proviso forbade the carrying of slaves into the region acquired from Mexico. The measure

[1] *American Historical Review*, 5, 493.

passed the House of Representatives and even threatened in the Senate. What would be the use of annexation if the Nordic and Southern institution of slavery was ruled out?

David Wilmot was a fat and commonplace congressman from Pennsylvania, but he gained immortality by the audacity of his proposal: he was probably the instrument of shrewder men. It is not unlikely that his startling measure kept the United States from acquiring Mexico. At one anaconda swallow the country might have expanded to Central America. The crazy framework of the Mexican state had gone to pieces under the shock of defeat; the country was a welter of anarchy except where American troops kept order, and the upper classes of Mexicans largely favored annexation. But the government drew back after a promising beginning, and the Wilmot Proviso must have had something to do with the decision. The government would be satisfied with a big bite: it would not ask all.

At the time the Southern politicians were more concerned with the Wilmot Proviso than with the gain of Mexico. The Proviso was the first open blow struck by the North at the South. It was a declaration of war. Historians have denounced the South for the part it played in the repeal of the Missouri Compromise; but the spirit of that compromise was first violated by Wilmot in his famous measure, which aimed at keeping the South from obtaining any further territory whatever. Of course, the South retaliated.

The Missouri Compromise was, on the whole, a wise measure. It ran a line through the Louisiana Purchase and gave all the territory to the north of the line to the North and all to the south of it to the South. If this compromise could have continued in force there might not have been a Civil War. But further accessions of territory must come

from the Southwest, since the North could not expand into Canada. Such an expansion threatened to make the South predominant in the Union; and it was, in a measure, in self-defense that the North backed the Wilmot Proviso. Yet the Proviso was a violation of the principle of territorial division recognized in the Missouri Compromise, and, very naturally, the South resented it.

The Wilmot Proviso was the first cause of the Civil War: it denied the South an equal place and an equal opportunity in the Union. At the same time it was necessary for the North to take this step. If the South had acquired all of Mexico, which was most probable at one time, the North would have been overbalanced by the tropic Nordics: the wealth and the power would have been with the South despite the immense non-Nordic immigration pouring into the North. The European civilization and industrial development of the North would have been imperiled by one of the greatest and most fascinating experiments that human history would have known—that of the tropical empire of the Anglo-Saxon Nordics.

Walker's dream faded: the empire was not to be. The actual frustration of the expansionist plans came about in a peculiar way. Polk was uneasy and undecided. Nicholas Trist, envoy accompanying Scott's army, took it on himself to make a treaty of peace with certain Mexicans claiming to be in authority, though there was no Mexican government at the moment. Polk, who had given Trist no power to commit the government, was astonished at the news. Buchanan and Walker urged him to reject the treaty. But Polk was glad to find a way out of Mexico, with the Wilmot Proviso distracting the country; and he confirmed the agreement. Mexico was lost. It did not go unsheared,

however. California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and Utah were the fruits of the war.

In the debates that went on in Congress over the Mexican settlement, Jefferson Davis showed himself an ardent expansionist, though he supported the administration when it decided on moderate acquisitions. He defended Polk against the assaults of Webster and Calhoun alike. He had a clear understanding of the possibilities of the new possession and immediately began to urge the building of a railroad to link the East and the South to the far Southwest. This was the pet scheme of his life. He failed in this, as in all the other large measures he advocated, and in no small degree because of his limitations. Yet in 1848, Jefferson Davis had no prevision of secession. He was a nationalist and expansionist, though an ardent Southerner. He looked to a greater Union, in which the South would retain its prestige and leadership. This means that he misunderstood the forces that underlay American life, for there could be no compromise between the developing Nordic tropicalism of the South and the modern Europeanism of the North. There could be only a truce preceding a fight to the finish. Yet it is, perhaps, a credit to Davis's heart if not to his head that, unlike some other Southerners, he did not foresee the inevitability of secession and war.

This year of the peace treaty, 1848, is a turning point in American history. It definitely marks the division of the republic into different camps. Before this time men had thought of the United States as a whole; after this they began to think of it as the North and the South—hostile twins bound together by that ligament of flesh, the Constitution. From now on the North fought to prevent the extension of slavery—that is, the expansion of the Nordic

South—while the South, in turn, opposed the admission of new free-labor states.

The first fight between the sections after the opening struggle over the Wilmot Proviso turned on the organization of Oregon as a territory with prohibition of slavery. The South opposed the prohibition of slavery in Oregon, though it had no hope of turning this far-away region into planter territory. It was simply retaliating for the Wilmot Proviso.

Jefferson Davis ardently sided with his colleagues of the lower South on Oregon. He was actuated by something more than the mere spirit of opposition. He wished to make a trade, permitting Oregon to be organized as a free-labor territory in return for the continuance of the Missouri Compromise line from the western boundary of the Louisiana Purchase to the Pacific Ocean. The Louisiana Purchase ended at the verge of what had been Mexican territory—Utah, Nevada, California.

This was a far-seeing and statesmanlike move, because the extension of the Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific —the definite dedication of all territory gained to the south of the line to the planter system—would have paved the way for vast accessions. Unfortunately for Davis, however, the Northerners saw as readily as himself the implications of such a concession. His attempt to force a new compromise over Oregon failed. The dominion was organized as a territory with prohibition of slavery.

Oregon had stirred up much bitterness. The conflicts in Congress were becoming increasingly obstinate and violent. The ancient decorum of the Senate was vanishing. Bills came up providing for the organization of California and New Mexico as territories without any reference to slavery. They did not pass, for this matter of the prohibi-

tion or permission of slavery in the territories had become the overshadowing issue. A political crisis was coming on the country more dangerous even than that settled by the Missouri Compromise or by Clay's compromise tariff of 1833.

The South was beginning to disbelieve in the finality of the Missouri Compromise, since the Wilmot Proviso was a refusal to extend the principle of that compromise to cover the situation created by the accession of Mexican territory. The South no longer valued a measure which no longer protected it. Robert Barnwell Rhett had advanced an opinion, sponsored by his master, Calhoun, that Congress had no right to prohibit slavery in any of the territories and, consequently, that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional.[1] Jefferson Davis and other Southerners were advancing toward this position. On the other hand, the North more and more inclined toward a definite prohibition of slavery in all the territories. North and South were drawing so far apart that the older politicians, who loved the Union, became alarmed. Lewis Cass, one of the few Americans of the time who still looked on the country as a whole and so could not be called a Northerner or a Southerner, originated the famous doctrine of "squatter sovereignty," usually attributed to Stephen A. Douglas, who later used it with momentous consequences. Squatter sovereignty was distinctly a Western creation, breathing as it did intense individualism. It sought to disregard Congress and leave the question of admitting slaves to the territories, or prohibiting them, to the people of the territories themselves. This was democracy with a vengeance. It opposed the intransigent theory of the North that Congress must exclude slavery from all the territories and the equally in-

[1] John W. Burgess, *The Middle Period*, 345.

transigent theory of the South that Congress must prevent the exclusion of slavery from any of the territories. It made the slavery question local, instead of congressional and national. Inasmuch, however, as slavery underlay the southward expansion of the United States, the question was national, in the largest sense, and could not be settled by such makeshifts as squatter sovereignty.

The North had had its way with Oregon, but California and New Mexico remained unorganized, though the former dominion, suddenly populated by gold hunters, was already clamoring for statehood. The situation steadily grew in menace. The conflict over Oregon had weakened the alliance of South and West, because the West had favored the organization of Oregon without slavery and the South had opposed it. Yet the alliance continued somewhat longer, for the West and South still had much in common. Immigration, however, was fast taking the West from the South, for the non-Nordic home-seekers from Europe swarming into the West were affiliated with the industrial North rather than with the South. The Nordic pioneers, fur-traders and Indian fighters, who had first settled the West and naturally preferred the South, were being overborne by the newcomers.

What had held the sections of the republic together so long was common party allegiance: Northern Democrats had usually been able to find a meeting ground with Southern Democrats, while Northern and Southern Whigs affiliated. But in the year 1848, for the first time, sectionalism overrode party allegiance, a precursor of the break-up of the Union.

The Democrats nominated the leading man of the West, Lewis Cass, a prominent party leader and a great patriot. The Whigs put up the war hero, Zachary Taylor, simply be-

cause of his military record. Taylor happened to be a Louisiana slaveholder; and several of the Southern states, normally Democratic by small majorities, went for him, as much because he was a slaveholder as because he was a hero. By this defection, Cass was defeated. The Western and Northern Democrats never forgave the South, and the alliance between West and South thus received another blow. It was now very near the end, but it was to last a few years longer and bring about one of the most dramatic crises in American history.

V

THE TRIUMPH OF INDUSTRIALISM

THE Wilmot Proviso and the fight over the organization of Oregon were symptoms of an impending storm in politics of the first magnitude. It was evident that things could not continue as they were, for every time that the question of organizing a territory or admitting a state came up in Congress a most bitter, stubborn and dangerous conflict followed. The matter of the territories was rending the Union to pieces. Unless some remedy was found, the political machinery would cease to function.

What was to be done? The question was asked by every politician and answered in several ways. A compromise was overwhelmingly demanded, but could still another compromise be made? And if it were possible, was it wise? Was it wise for the South to consent to further concessions?

The politicians of the border states were almost overwhelmingly for compromise. Those of the North and of the lower South were much less so. Jefferson Davis, who had shown himself strongly Southern in the debates on the Wilmot Proviso and Oregon, did not favor compromise. His was not a yielding nature and his blood was up. He so nearly approached the position of the Southern extremists on slavery and states' rights that he was hailed by their leaders, Rhett and Yancey, as a comrade and considered as a possible

candidate of the South in the approaching presidential election of 1852.

The moment was critical, in a sense the most critical in American politics. Both Rhett and Yancey advocated a downright defiance of the North. They were prepared to go beyond Calhoun—indeed, to defy him if need be. Yancey was the incarnation of the spirit of the lower South, of the tropical Nordics. He was an orator of great power, but his advocacy of extreme measures arose rather from passion than from farsightedness. It was altogether otherwise with Rhett. He was a statesman of penetrating vision who believed that it would be better for the South to withdraw from the Union than to give way to the North or to make another compromise on the subject of slavery in the territories. Speaking in a large historical sense, Rhett was right. The question of slavery, which centered in itself all the antagonistic forces of American life—agriculture and industrialism, Nordicism and non-Nordicism, European civilization and tropical empire, aristocracy and democracy—was one that could never be settled by compromise, and Rhett was astute enough to see it. Being perfectly cold-blooded and logical, he did not shrink from the consequences of any act he considered necessary; and if war flowed from it, why, let it flow. If he had had his way, the South would have refused to compromise in 1850 and seceded then and there. In the long run, this would have been the best course for the South, for the South was relatively stronger and the North relatively weaker than a decade later. The chances of war would have favored the former in 1850.

Rhett and Yancey did not think that it could safely stay in the Union. Jefferson Davis himself seems to have doubted. When unclouded by passion, his political judg-

ment was sometimes very sound, though he was capable of making the worst blunders on occasions. At this time, 1850, he was not sufficiently excited and exasperated to lose his poise, and he seems to have thought that secession might be best. At least he was in sympathy with Rhett and Yancey.

Probably partly at his moving, Mississippi called a convention of the slave states to meet in Nashville in June, 1850. If Calhoun had been alive when the body assembled, there is no telling the outcome, but the great leader died in March, at the critical moment. There was no one who could take his place.

The call of a Southern convention for June, 1850, was due to a new and most dangerous congressional deadlock. California had applied for admission to the Union with a non-slavery constitution and without undergoing territorial probation. The North was thus demanding a part of the possessions acquired from Mexico as a non-slavery state, while still holding to the Wilmot Proviso and refusing to give the South its share of the remaining acquisitions, Utah and New Mexico. The result was that the Southerners in Congress, Whigs and Democrats, under the leadership of Alexander H. Stephens, united to block the admission of California and all other legislation. It was a new crisis. Calhoun wrote at this time, "Disunion is the only alternative that is left us." [1] The situation was so alarming that Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, with their followers, outlined a plan of compromise. Webster made his great Seventh of March speech, in which he abandoned the Wilmot Proviso and held out the olive branch to the South. The speech cost him his political future, but it did much to

[1] *American Historical Review*, 27, 247.

conciliate the South, where secession sentiment was rapidly spreading.[1] Following this effort at conciliation, the various provisions of the Compromise of 1850 were introduced in Congress and supported by Clay with all his matchless parliamentary management.

Disunion feeling, however, still continued to be strong in the South. In Mississippi, Governor Quitman and Jefferson Davis worked strenuously against compromise. Robert Barnwell and Robert Barnwell Rhett in South Carolina; William L. Yancey in Alabama; R. M. T. Hunter in Virginia were the other leaders in the movement for the Nashville convention, which was frankly expected to consider the question of secession. Nine Southern states elected delegates to the convention. North Carolina and Louisiana failed to do so, and the border states, Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri, were kept out of the movement by the influence of Clay and Benton.

When the convention met, the Compromise of 1850 was practically a *fait accompli*. The Southern people, who had no wish to secede but who had been driven to desperation by the fear of seeing all the territory taken from Mexico made into anti-slavery states, gladly accepted the compromise. The secession leaders found themselves powerless, and the Nashville convention broke up without accomplishing anything whatever. Rhett was so vexed that he soon afterward gave up his seat in the Senate and went back to managing his newspaper, the famous Charleston *Mercury*. It was his fate to be the Southern Cassandra.

Rhett was the leading thinker of the South after Calhoun, but he did not have Calhoun's mastery of men. He was nothing of the tribune. He was an aristocrat, elected

[1] *American Historical Review*, 27, 250.

to the Senate by a state controlled by a narrow oligarchy; and too proud, too detached, too malign to be the head of a popular movement. The South admired but distrusted him, considering him wholly unsafe. It would not follow him, as it had followed Calhoun. Yet ten years later it was obliged to admit that he was right, and it seceded ten years after he raised the disunion standard. Hot-headed Southerner is a proverb, but Rhett was anything but hot-headed. He was, in reality, a fanatical patriot who was resolved to save the Nordic, slavery South he knew at any price. His morality was Nietzschean and ruthless and he did not shrink from war. His brutal honesty dismayed where he would have liked to persuade and encourage. He knew no arts of cajolery. Able, strong-willed, courageous as he was, there was about him too much of the lord and master for a democratic republic, and for this reason he failed, though he was one of the foremost minds of his time. He stands as the supreme type of the tropic Nordic in politics.

The Compromise of 1850 was a marvelous feat of balancing that proves Henry Clay a genius. None but a political genius could have brought the North and South together at such a time. By using every device known to the art of persuasion and the science of politics, the Kentucky statesman succeeded in getting through Congress measures that ended the slavery crisis for the time and seemed, to the men of the time, to be a permanent solution. In brief, California, though it lay mostly below the Missouri Compromise line, was admitted without slavery, and the slave trade was abolished in the District of Columbia. Against these Northern gains, territorial governments that did not prohibit slavery were to be set up in Utah and

New Mexico; a Fugitive Slave law was passed, and a guarantee was given of non-interference in the inter-state slave trade. The North received the better portion, for Utah and New Mexico were sand deserts and it was exceedingly doubtful that Congress had any power to interfere in the slave trade. All that the South really obtained was the Fugitive Slave act, and that was to prove a Dead Sea apple. Southerners, however, were willing to accept almost any settlement that seemed to put an end to the interminable dispute. The great thing to them was the abandonment of the principle of the Wilmot Proviso by the North. They did not know that the abandonment was only in appearance.

The Compromise of 1850 was successful in so far that it deferred secession for ten years, by the end of which time the North was strong enough to put down the South. It did not succeed, however, even temporarily, in settling the slavery issue. No sooner was the treaty made between the sections than it proved inoperative. Congress had accepted the Fugitive Slave act, but the Northern public had not. It aroused bitter anger among the abolitionists, the more so that it was likely to prove effective. States were not left any longer to practice abolition on a small scale by protecting runaway slaves from the South. The strong arm of the federal government now reached out and snatched black fugitives from altruistic kidnappers hurrying them to Canada. Nevertheless juries obstructed the return of slaves to owners, and mobs resorted to violence to rescue them. There was practically a rebellion in the North against the Fugitive Slave act, and it became null and void. The net result of the Compromise of 1850 was that the South got nothing.

Jefferson Davis fought the compromise in the Senate with all his power. He opposed the Fugitive Slave act on the ground that it violated states' rights: he declared that he would rather see Massachusetts leave the Union than have the law executed within its boundaries by United States soldiers.[1] Rhett agreed with him. In fact, the Fugitive Slave act was no measure of the lower South, which lost few runaway slaves, but of the border states, which suffered the loss of a thousand slaves—that is, a million dollars—every year by the flitting of bondmen across the border. The lower South, in making common cause with the border states on this measure, sacrificed much in the hope of securing the unity of all the slave section. But in this case, as later, the sacrifice was in vain.

Davis refused to accept a compromise that gave the South nothing. He saw clearly enough that no settlement could be satisfactory to the South that did not lay down definite territorial limits between the sections. He demanded the extension of the Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific, which was reasonable enough on the face of it, if the North desired a real settlement. He offered as a substitute to Clay's measure to admit California as a half non-slave and half slave state, a curious political device that must have led to complications if it had been tried. But the North could not afford to make a real compromise on the question of slavery in the territories. If it had done so, it would have given the Southern Nordics a chance to build up the tropical empire they dreamed of and absolutely to have dominated the Union. In that case, Nordicism would have triumphed over modernism.

Clay's compromise passed Congress. It was accepted,

[1] Burgess, *The Middle Period*, 371.

at least apparently, by the North and the border states. It remained to be seen whether or no the South would acquiesce. For a time the issue seemed doubtful, for many of the leaders opposed the compromise. The elections, however, in Georgia and Alabama went in favor of the measure. The critical state, at the moment, was Mississippi, for if Mississippi had refused to endorse the Compromise of 1850 South Carolina would almost certainly have followed. As it was, Virginia persuaded South Carolina to remain quiet.[1]

In Mississippi, John A. Quitman, that magnificent Nordic who had moved South from New York that he might enjoy a more congenial environment, was the anti-compromise candidate for governor. The Whigs nominated the leading "Unionist" of the state, Henry S. Foote, who cherished a lifelong hatred for the President of the Confederacy. The preservation of the Union was the issue. An election on the question of holding a state convention to pass on the Compromise of 1850 was carried by a majority of 7,000 in favor of the compromise—that is, the convention movement was defeated. At this signal of defeat, Quitman dropped out of the race for governor. The anti-compromisers were now in a quandary for a candidate; but the vacant place was taken by Jefferson Davis, who had all along been in sympathy with Quitman. He resigned his seat in the Senate to make the fight.

Davis could have had but little hope of success, for it was more and more evident that the South had accepted the compromise. Still he made a most vigorous and eloquent campaign, and the majority of 7,000 against the convention was cut down to little more than 1,000 for Foote for governor. It was a personal triumph if a political defeat.

[1] *American Historical Review*, 27, 248.

The secession movement was dead for the time. The Southern people demanded a trial for the Compromise of 1850. Jefferson Davis bowed to the will of the people. For three years, from 1848 to 1851, he had walked the path that led to secession: he had been one of the most belligerent of the Southern leaders. He had opposed concession because he was not by nature a compromiser: he was a fighter. He believed that concessions would do no good, that it was better to fight first than last. And he had been right. Later events justified his judgment and his position. But the people had decided, in no uncertain voice, against the seceders and in favor of Clay and Foote. Davis now made a deliberate and far-reaching change of policy. Dropping entirely the idea of secession, he went back to Calhoun's old plan of building up the South within the Union so that it would be able to hold its own and more.

In this change, Jefferson Davis showed himself part politician and part average optimist. He was part politician in that he abandoned a position that could lead to nothing but the ending of his career. Rhett was made of sterner fiber. He preferred to end his career to accepting the Compromise of 1850, which he rightly regarded as fatal to the South. But Jefferson Davis had neither the stark idealism nor the sardonic insight that marked Rhett as, in some respects, the foremost public man of his day. Davis was a man of deep patriotism, kindly feelings and good intentions as well as an ambitious statesman. The general love feast that accompanied the Compromise of 1850 somewhat deceived him. He became more hopeful. He began to believe that the South might continue in the Union despite the conflicting tendencies of the sections. Consequently, from this time he worked to preserve the Union, though un-

consciously he did much to bring about secession. What he did not see, as Rhett so clearly saw, was that the South had to submit to modernism or leave the Union; and in his efforts to save the South while maintaining the Union he only succeeded in making secession the more inevitable. No man in the country did more to further disunion and yet no man in the country strove more earnestly and conscientiously to preserve the Union. Indeed, at the end Rhett hated him for a Unionist. It is just to say that if Jefferson Davis had succeeded in his policy there would have been no secession and no war.

For the time he was discredited by his opposition to the Compromise of 1850. He seemed in for a long retirement. He was too important a man to be ignored, however, and too eager and ambitious to stay out of affairs. In 1852, Franklin Pierce was nominated by the Democrats as a Northern man in sympathy with the South. It happened that Davis was one of his closest friends. The Mississippian was thus led to take an active part in the presidential campaign, speaking in several states. Pierce, on his election, offered him the post of Secretary of War, which, after some little hesitation, he accepted. In the same cabinet, William L. Marcy was Secretary of State and Caleb Cushing Attorney-General.

It is hardly too much to say that Jefferson Davis was the most conspicuous figure in the somewhat colorless government of Franklin Pierce. In a group of intelligent but conventional, old-fashioned politicians, Jefferson Davis, a leader of the tropic Nordics, could not fail to be prominent. Carl Schurz has left a description of his splendid appearance at this time, the zenith, in some ways, of his career. He was, beyond doubt, very striking—rather tall, thin,

arrow-straight, Indian-looking, with the calm, powerful, confident face of a master of many slaves. Few American public men have ever had a finer presence.

He was happy as Secretary of War. He loved the theory of war, if not the practice, and he was a good administrator —possibly one of the best war ministers we have had. That post usually falls to tired politicians without military knowledge or military ambitions. Jefferson Davis was a trained soldier and something of an enthusiast. He had largely recovered from the malaria that had so injured his health; he was not worn out, as he was in 1861, by the emotional strain of a long and bitter conflict. He was hopeful, thinking that things might come right, after all, and that the South could live in the Union without sacrificing its self-respect. So he went to work with a vim that impressed every one.

He improved and enlarged the army, introduced new weapons, experimented with camels as a means of desert transport, and found time to complete the Capitol and do other odd jobs.

The experience was profitable in some ways; less fortunate, perhaps, in others. Jefferson Davis became imbued somewhat with the routine spirit; he fell into the habit of details. When he was elected President of the South, with a great war on his hands, his old war office ways asserted themselves, and he gave an amount of attention to military details that he could ill afford. All in all, his career as Secretary of War probably did not help to prepare him for the supreme effort of his life.[1]

As a politician, this was Jefferson Davis's great hour. In a mediocre cabinet a man of such force could not but as-

[1] J. B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, 2, 320

sert himself, and the Mississippian grew to be the dominant personality of the administration. He used his influence to carry out his plan to make the South strong in the Union by expansion. The shelving of the Wilmot Proviso by the Compromise of 1850 gave him a hope of success. He did not see that the defeat of the Wilmot Proviso was only in form, that it persisted in the Northern consciousness as a demand that must be maintained in some new way. He did not see that Southern expansion within the Union was impossible, or well-nigh so, that the North would not and could not suffer it—that it would endanger the North too much. Perhaps no one in the country at this time but Rhett saw that the South must fail in its efforts and come to secession in the end.

Jefferson Davis sought to extend the boundaries of the republic in three fields: the part of Mexico immediately south of the United States, Cuba and Central America. These were desirable acquisitions, but it was evident after the storm over the Wilmot Proviso that marvelous political legerdemain would be required for success. Davis underestimated the difficulties; he committed himself to an undertaking that even Clay himself, with all his cunning, could hardly have achieved.

Cuba was the main prize, and Davis laid his plot with Cuba chiefly in mind. It was an elaborate scheme. Pierre Soulé, an expansionist, was selected as minister to Spain; he was to take the leading part in securing the Pearl of the Antilles. John Y. Mason and James Buchanan, late Secretary of State, were sent to France and England respectively as accessories. The undertaking was quite beyond the powers of these men, none of whom had much knowledge of diplomacy. But Jefferson Davis himself never shone in

diplomacy, and he had little acquaintance with Europe and with the qualifications needed for the difficult task he essayed.

Fate, however, played into Davis's hands, and but for the inflexible opposition of the North to any considerable expansion of the South he might have gained his ends. An American ship, the *Black Warrior,* was seized by the Spanish off the Cuban coast and heavily penalized for some infraction of the tariff laws. Soulé at once presented a demand for indemnity to the Spanish court, which refused to reply. So far things had gone well; the stage was set for intervention in Cuba; and if Davis could have commanded the services of our modern press, always so belligerent, war with Spain would probably have followed. As it was, the situation was encouraging.

The three ministers now proceeded to throw the fat in the fire. In October, 1854, Soulé, Mason and Buchanan met at Ostend, in Belgium, and perpetrated the worst *faux pas* in American history, the Ostend Manifesto. This was a declaration to the world that the United States wanted Cuba and meant to have it by hook or crook, either by pocketbook or mailed fist. Bombshell diplomacy is always likely to explode the wrong way. The manifesto awakened the indignation of Europe, accustomed to the refinements of rapacity, at the crude covetousness of the Western republic. It also alarmed the anti-slavery North. Marcy, in his vexation, recalled Soulé, who had made himself a European laughingstock, and accepted a settlement of the *Black Warrior* business. Cuba was dropped like a hot potato. Thus Jefferson Davis's main expansionist effort failed, and partly because he did not know, or could not get, the men needed for a delicate mission. The failure was aggravated by an

abortive filibustering expedition to Cuba, led by the irrepressible Quitman.

The second part of the program was more successful. James Gadsden obtained for the country, by purchase, what is now southern New Mexico and Arizona. What was the object in securing this small strip of desert? A deep plan lay beneath it. Jefferson Davis was projecting a railroad to the Pacific, and the Gadsden Purchase supplied the desired route.

Davis's third plan came within a degree of success. It was essayed by William Walker, the most gorgeous adventurer in American history and a man who exemplified the Nordic race at its best. Landing in Nicaragua with a handful of men, Walker interfered in the interminable wars of that so-called republic. He succeeded in making himself dictator, only to be driven out by a rising. He returned and was driven out once more. He made still another attempt in 1860 and was captured and executed. His was the saddest of premature ends, because he would have immensely enjoyed the great war that followed so hard on his death. Joaquin Miller has described this brave spirit:

A piercing eye, a princely air,
A presence like a chevalier,
Half angel and half Lucifer;
Sombrero black, with plume of snow
That swept his careless locks below.
Great Spanish spurs with bells of steel
That dashed and dangled at the heel;
A face of blended pride and pain,
Of mingled pleading and disdain,
With shades of glory and of grief—
The famous filibuster chief

Stood front his men among the trees
That top the fierce Cordilleras,
With bent arm arched above his brow;—
Stood still, he stands, a picture, now—
Long gazing down his inland seas.

Jefferson Davis had shown imagination and energy in his planning, but the task was beyond his strength. Perhaps it was beyond the strength of any man. Only by the utmost adroitness could the South have won Cuba and Central America, and Jefferson Davis was not adroit. He was too proud, too open, too honest to succeed in deep-laid and subtle intrigues. Yet his expansionist program was commendable; it was the outcome of a natural and proper ambition. So far the South had sought to expand in the region of its "manifest destiny." Its political action had been conservative and self-restrained.

The South now made a mistake, however, that proved its undoing. It did not do this of its own motion, but in the effort to maintain the alliance with the West, to which it justly attached the utmost importance. Indeed, everything depended on the alliance. If it continued, the South might even succeed in its expansionist plans despite the bitter opposition of the North. But the West-South entente had been weakened by Cass's defeat in 1848, and if the West went over to the North the South would be overwhelmed. Its political position would be hopeless.

The West, using this alliance for its own ends, precipitated the fiercest political struggle in American history. In 1854, the South was still resentful of the Wilmot Proviso and still anxious to expand somewhere. It had become evident by this time that Utah and New Mexico were of no use to

the section. Cuba was a hope rather than an expectation. Yet the South, while it could do nothing positive, had it in its power to prevent the organization of further territories and the admission of new states.

Now, the West of the fifties was ready to extend into the great unorganized dominion lying beyond Missouri and Iowa, a part of the Louisiana Purchase. This was an unfenced prairie on which buffaloes still moved in herds and painted Indians still fought with bows and arrows. The time had come to turn this magnificent natural park into homesteads. The people of Iowa and Missouri wished to take up land in this region, as well as thousands of immigrants from Europe. Back of the organization of a territory was a plan to build a railroad from St. Louis or Chicago to the Pacific. This was a rival to Jefferson Davis's scheme for a Charleston-San Francisco railway.

David A. Atchison, senator from Missouri, pressed Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, the leader of the Western Democrats, to further the organization of a territory. Douglas saw an opportunity to do two things: to put the West under deep obligations to himself and also to make into law what was coming to be the Democratic interpretation of the Compromise of 1850 as regarded slavery in the territories. This was the doctrine of non-interference with slavery in the territories. The people of Utah and New Mexico were left to decide for themselves whether or no they would have slavery—squatter sovereignty in effect. It was Douglas's idea that the people of all the territories might have the same privilege. In this way he would put an end to the fierce conflicts that arose in Congress every time a territory was organized as to whether it should be organized as free-labor or slave. Besides—and this was the important con-

sideration—the South would be induced by the concession to agree to the organization of new territories and, possibly, to the Pacific railroad idea.

The main trouble with Douglas's plan was that it involved the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, which expressly excluded slavery from the region in question. But the Missouri Compromise had been weakened by the Wilmot Proviso and the Compromise of 1850, the first of which disregarded geographical lines in the settlement of slavery disputes and the second of which substituted local action for congressional on the subject of slavery. Douglas thought that the Missouri Compromise might be set aside on the ground that it had become obsolete. He was mistaken: political agreements, no matter how outworn, are too useful to some party or faction to be overthrown without convulsions.

Douglas introduced a bill in the Senate for the organization of a territory—afterward changed to the two territories of Kansas and Nebraska—leaving the matter of bringing slaves into the territory to be decided by the people themselves. The bill thus extended to a section of the country closed to slavery by the Missouri Compromise the principle of squatter sovereignty.

At this time there were three theories on the question of admitting slaves to the territories. One was that of the lower South, early urged by Rhett, that Congress had no right to exclude slaves from the common domain, that only states had the power to keep out slaves. Another was the Wilmot Proviso view that Congress should exclude slaves from all the territories. The third was the squatter sovereignty idea that Congress should not interfere at all but leave the question of slavery to be decided by the inhabitants

of the territories themselves. The first demanded action of Congress in behalf of slavery; the second against slavery; the third neutrality.[1]

Douglas's bill has usually been represented by historians as a bombshell, as a bolt from the blue. This was by no means the case. There was already a growing belief that the Missouri Compromise had been superseded by the Compromise of 1850. Moreover, the Kansas-Nebraska bill was not, as has so often been asserted, a bribe to the South for the presidential nomination of 1856. It was in reality a compromise measure; it gave the South something, or rather it appeared to give the South something, but it did not establish the real Southern contention that slavery should not be interfered with in the territories. Popular sovereignty might—as a matter of fact, did—turn against the South instead of in its favor. The new territories might become free-labor, not slave, states; and there is every reason to believe that Douglas expected this outcome. He was interested in getting the West and South behind him for the Democratic nomination in 1856, but he was not attempting to further the extension of slavery. He sought to dupe the South, not bribe it. In this he succeeded.

The lower South politicians did not take up Douglas's bill with alacrity. At first they were suspicious, as they had every right to be. They had little to gain and much to lose by it. But when Dixon of Kentucky, Clay's successor in the Senate, amended the bill with a clause declaring the Missouri Compromise repealed, they gave it firm support. Douglas did not like the amendment, but he had to accept it. It rallied the South to his side, but it at once awakened a fury of opposition in the North. It was denounced by the

[1] P. O. Ray, *The Repeal of the Missouri Compromise*, 187.

abolition press as a new and insolent advance of the Slave Power; it was in reality an effort of the shrewdest of American politicians to hoodwink the Slave Power for his own benefit.

Douglas now felt that he must appeal to the administration for support, as he wished to force the bill through Congress before the country had time to become fully worked up over it: the storm he had aroused astonished him, for the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was no new idea. Accordingly, he went to Jefferson Davis, Pierce's friend and *alter ego,* and asked him to procure an immediate interview with the President. The day was Sunday and Pierce was a strict sabbatarian, but Douglas was too disturbed to wait.

This was the most critical moment in the life of Jefferson Davis. His action now was charged with a fatality far surpassing that of 1861, for by that time the issues had been made. But in the hour when Stephen A. Douglas sought Davis's assistance for the Kansas-Nebraska bill the future was still on the knees of the gods. Pierce's approval or disapproval meant the success or failure of the bill. Davis was all-powerful with Pierce, and he could have turned the administration against Douglas. If he had done so, he would have saved the South from a tactical error that made war inevitable by bringing on a fierce and useless political struggle in which the South had no chance to gain anything and which inflamed the passions of both sections to madness.

Davis did not see into the future. He was sufficiently disturbed by Douglas's request, however, to hesitate. Finally he agreed to go with Douglas to the White House and attempt to obtain an interview for the Illinoisian. Pierce heard what Douglas had to say and gave his approval to the Kansas-Nebraska bill in the honest belief that it was a

further compromise measure, a sort of rider to the Compromise of 1850. It is true that neither the President nor the Secretary of War lent the bill active support, but they did not oppose it, and thereby they paved the way for secession and war. That secession at this time was not in Jefferson Davis's thoughts is evident from his strenuous efforts to strengthen the South within the Union and his projected railroad across the country. Yet his action was at variance with his intention.

This was the first great mistake of Jefferson Davis's career. His opposition to the Compromise of 1850 and his semi-secession campaign in 1851 might seem mistakes, and they nearly ended his political life, but they were prompted by a sound instinct that the South could not afford to accept a compromise that gave it nothing. When he turned against secession and became a Unionist, as he did, the case was different. It was his intention, then, to seek to prevent disruption; but his support of Douglas nullified all of his efforts and accelerated disunion.

The South, in 1851, had elected to remain in the Union. The policy it should have followed was to refuse to consent to the organization of new territories unless granted accessions itself. It was the policy that brought about the Compromise of 1850, and it might have done much more. The South should have demanded Cuba or a slice of Mexico in return for the organization of Kansas and Nebraska as free-labor territories. Cuba or more of Mexico might have been bought at this time for a good price. Such gains would have been solid. As it was, all that Douglas's measure gave the South was the right to compete with the North, at every disadvantage, for Kansas.

The South had no idea of contesting Nebraska. It

thought that it could secure Kansas, and that Nebraska and Kansas would offset each other, leaving the balance of power undisturbed. There was no reason to expect to gain Kansas. The whole logic of the political situation was against such a calculation. If the North had opposed the Mexican War for fear of the acquisition of more slave territory and if it resisted the winning of so magnificent a domain as Cuba because it was a slave island, what rational hope was there that it would consent to the extension of slavery in the West, on the very borders of Iowa? The Southern politicians showed astonishingly little penetration when they let themselves be deluded into supporting the Kansas-Nebraska bill in the expectation that Kansas would become a slave state. But the Southern leaders in Congress at this time were mostly second-rate. Calhoun was dead and Rhett was in private life. Robert W. Toombs, the ablest Southerner in Congress, was absent when Douglas introduced his bill and was appalled on returning to find the South fully committed to it. Jefferson Davis had been in the position to save the South from a fatal blunder, but Douglas had overreached him as well as the Southern members of Congress.

Davis did not yet realize, what he was soon to learn, that the Kansas-Nebraska bill put an end to his own schemes of expansion and to his Southern Pacific railway. The rage of the North over the repeal of the Missouri Compromise made any hope of accession of territory outside the Union futile. The Southern Pacific railroad was also wrecked. Indeed, though Davis did not know it, Douglas's bill was designed to wreck it. Douglas was bent on pushing his own plan for a Chicago-Pacific railroad, which necessitated the defeat of Davis's railway. The ambitions of Douglas and Davis were not compatible, and yet Davis had been

gulled into supporting his rival. It is seldom that a politician makes a more complete smash of his schemes than Jefferson Davis did when he lent his aid to Stephen A. Douglas and the Kansas-Nebraska bill.

The South had put itself in the position of reopening the slavery contest for no better reward than the vague and uncertain principle of squatter or popular sovereignty. It had been maneuvered out of its strong position of opposition to the formation of new territories by this poor bait. It was pulling the chestnuts out of the fire for the West. It was being denounced throughout the North as a treaty breaker in advocating the repeal of the Missouri Compromise when it was, in reality, only helping Westerners and foreigners to homes on free lands and the ambitious town of Chicago to become the railway center of the country. The lower South had nothing whatever to hope from the Kansas-Nebraska bill. The only possible Southern gainer would be the border state of Missouri, which in the end gained nothing at all.

Why should the South have hoped to gain Kansas as a slave state? There were not enough slaves to cultivate cotton in the lower South. The demand for negroes was constantly growing. Where, then, were the thousands of slaves needed for the settlement of Kansas as a slave state to come from? While a handful of Missouri slave-owners wanted new lands, a thousand Westerners and immigrants eagerly craved homesteads. The raw West was a country for pioneers, for poor men, not for the owners of such expensive chattels as slaves. Surely the Southerners were outwitted when they came to the support of the Kansas-Nebraska bill. It was indeed an ominous sign of the times that the South, which had held its own chiefly by political

astuteness, was now finding the politicians of other sections to be more astute than its own. Apparently, the motive that led the lower South to enter Douglas's trap was the desire to save the alliance with the West, for which it had already made such sacrifices. Yet the result of the Southern support of Douglas was not the cementing of the alliance but its complete and final overthrow.

Everything turned out awry. The blame for the Kansas-Nebraska bill was put largely on the South. The feeling in the North against slavery was greatly embittered by the assertions, now being continually made, that the Slave Power was seeking to force slavery on the whole country. Douglas, who had hoped to unite the West and South behind him for the presidential nomination of 1856, found himself regarded as the tool of the Slave Power. His unpopularity in the North was so intense that he was set aside in 1856. Nearly every politician of the Democratic party was disqualified by some connection with the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. The nomination finally went to James Buchanan, chiefly for the reason that he had been in England and so had taken no part in the matter. The Illinois senator, however, did not abandon his hope of the presidency; he only changed his position so as to win back his lost popularity.

In his efforts to advance the interests of the West and make himself President, he had set forces in play of which he had not dreamed. He had, in reality, brought about the organization of the Republican party, which was the political expression of Northern industrialism and Western anti-slavery agriculturism. It immediately showed its economic basis by becoming strongly protectionist. The Republicans nominated their first presidential candidate in 1856. Buchanan was elected over him by so slight a margin

that it was evident that the long hold of the Democratic party on the country was near breaking.

The new President entered office as the principle of popular sovereignty was being put to the test in Kansas. The South was about to see what a mess of pottage it had received at Douglas's hands. The Missouri planters, pouring into the new territory, sought to win it for the South. At the same time, swarms of political settlers were hurried there by emigrant-aid societies in the North. It became a race to see which side could control the territorial elections.

Violence soon followed. Many of the settlers were gunmen and lives were lost on both sides. The anti-slavery men dubbed their opponents "border ruffians." On the other side, John Brown gained a sinister fame by killing a number of pro-slavery advocates. In the beginning, the pro-slavery men were in a majority, but the crowds of immigrants from the North soon turned the scale against them. It was evident that the anti-slaverites would control the government.

In hurrying throngs of settlers to Kansas in order to resist the introduction of slaves, the North was right. The great grain-growing fields of the West were needed as homes for poor Easterners and Europeans. The South, in abandoning its proper policy of extending southward into the tropics, put itself in the wrong, and in a hopeless cause. There was never any chance that Kansas would become planter soil. Popular sovereignty favored superior numbers even more than did Congress. It was evident that both Nebraska and Kansas would become anti-slavery territories. The South had been gulled.

But the Southerners were now so thoroughly aroused that they refused to bow to the inevitable. They had never really believed in popular sovereignty or expected much

from it: it was Western, not Southern. When it began to register the will of the anti-slavery army of settlers, the South turned to the doctrine, announced by Calhoun and Rhett, of the equal rights of slaveholders in the territories. It is difficult to see what they hoped for from this doctrine in the case of Kansas. It was certain that Kansas would have a large majority of citizens opposed to slavery. Even if it should be admitted under a slave constitution, slavery would not be bound thereby on the state. The anti-slavery majority could abolish slavery, and Congress would be powerless to interfere. Congress could keep Kansas from being an anti-slavery territory; it could not keep it from being a free-labor state. Yet the Southerners now bent their efforts to defeat the workings of popular sovereignty.

They were suddenly aided by the third arm of the government, the judiciary. The Supreme Court, late in 1856, in the famous Dred Scott case, ruled that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional (thirty-six years after it had come into effect!) and that the people of all the states had the right to carry their property into any of the territories. Neither Congress nor popular sovereignty might exclude the property of citizens from the territories, and slaves were property.

From a certain point of view this decision sounds reasonable: it would seem unconstitutional to discriminate against any class of citizens in the territories. But legal logic is almost as artificial as the medieval problem as to the number of angels who can dance on the point of a needle. Legally, indeed, slaves were mere property, yet even legally they were very different from other property. It was murder to kill a slave, and slaves were represented in Congress. They were such a singular form of property that they threat-

ened to bring down the Union in ruins: they constituted the bone of contention between the planter South, which lived by their labor, and the industrial North, which paid wages. To treat them, then, as dry goods or cattle was the very insanity of legality.

The South, however, had become so exasperated by the long dispute that began in 1846, with the Wilmot Proviso, and now after ten years was more furious than ever, that it seized on the Dred Scott opinion as a means of winning its case in Kansas. It did not realize what Shakespeare has so admirably illustrated in *The Merchant of Venice,* that the minority—the real minority in power—cannot use the law to wrest a victory from the majority when the majority is aroused. A Portia always arises to prove the rightness of the strong. The greatest mistake the South made, in all its contest with the North, was in imagining that a great political conflict, which had embittered the whole country, could be settled by a court decision—that the North would tamely abandon its contention at the bidding of a majority of the Supreme Court judges. Yet this was what the Southerners, Jefferson Davis foremost among them, expected.

Before the Kansas-Nebraska act, Davis had in the main shown political wisdom. He had made his first great mistake in lending Douglas his help in that matter. He now made a worse blunder by demanding the acceptance of the Dred Scott opinion as a basis of settling the slavery question. In a notable speech in Mississippi, in October, 1857, Jefferson Davis declared that popular sovereignty had failed and that the federal government was under obligation to protect slavery in the territories. "African slavery," he said, "as it exists in the United States is a moral, a social, and a

political blessing." [1] These bold and perhaps not altogether untrue words, since slavery was the corner stone of Nordic rule, were unfortunate in that they tended to blind the South to the reality of the situation and the impossibility of securing the acceptance of the Dred Scott opinion in the North. Davis himself was a blind leader of the blind on this issue.

Jefferson Davis entered the Senate again this year. His semi-secessionist attitude of 1851 had not yet been forgotten, and the legislature in 1856 elected him over the Unionist, Foote, only by the vote of the presiding officer. He had now no thought of secession, however, though his attitude on the Dred Scott opinion was destined to lead once more in that direction.

He found the Senate a new body, much changed from its former ponderous dignity. The fierce passions let loose by the struggle over the Kansas-Nebraska act were not to be kept down by tradition, and the Northerners exasperated the Southerners by cold and deliberate insult while the Southerners angered their opponents by their arrogant, fire-eating manners. Indeed, the politicians of the lower South, who had pushed aside the tamer representatives of the border states and were now in the saddle, were of a new type. They were tropic Nordics, personally brave and accustomed to dueling, despots used to ruling slaves, politicians elected by independent farmers, haughty, truthful, honest —a fine if tempestuous kind of men. One of them provoked the North to utter fury by assaulting Sumner in revenge for a gross insult. To such things did Congress come in the strife between the two types of American civilization that was now tearing the Union to pieces!

[1] Dodd, *Jefferson Davis*, 154.

Douglas poured oil on the flames of the sectional warfare by the new course he adopted. All his calculations had gone wrong. The Kansas-Nebraska act, intended to benefit the West, was looked on as a bribe for planter support. The South, aware that it had been duped and dragged into another anti-slavery contest with little prospect of gain, was in no humor to acquiesce in popular sovereignty, which gave Kansas to the North. It now stood for the Dred Scott opinion. Conversely, the North was well satisfied with popular sovereignty, since that policy worked for its benefit. Douglas had come out boldly on the side of the North, declaring that popular sovereignty made Kansas territory free-labor soil. By this stroke the agile politician regained his lost popularity in the North but lost his friends in the South. It was in vain that the Little Giant, like a modern preacher reconciling science and religion, sought to show that popular sovereignty and the Dred Scott opinion were not in conflict. The Southerners, who had been fooled once, were in no mood to listen to protestations intended merely to soothe their defeat. Douglas all along had been for the West and the West alone, and he had come to stand with the North since the West and North were being brought into an alliance by the threat of Kansas as a slavery state.

In essence, he was right: Kansas was lost to the South, and the South might as well have faced the situation. But the federal government now took a hand in the interests of the slavery section. It did this, partly because it was under Southern influence but more because it had an instinctive feeling that the welfare of the country was bound up in the balance of power, which had preserved peace so long. James Buchanan has been much abused and little defended, but he was, in reality, one of the most patriotic and broad-

minded public men the country has ever had. In the interests of peace he sought to win Kansas for the South.

Yet the administration, generally, was fair. It sent out governors to Kansas who were so little partisan that several of them went over to the anti-slavery faction in the territory. Jefferson Davis, as Secretary of War, chose Colonel E. V. Sumner, a free-soiler, as military commander, and when Sumner dispersed an anti-slavery legislature the Secretary informed him that he should not have interfered so long as the anti-slaverites kept the peace. "Personally and officially," says John W. Burgess in discussing this incident, "Mr. Davis was a remarkably upright man, and was accustomed to take counsel of his own judgment and conscience." [1]

Buchanan, under the influence of Jefferson Davis and Howell Cobb, Secretary of the Treasury, nevertheless made strong efforts to induce Kansas to accept a pro-slavery state constitution. There came to be two territorial governments and two constitutions, one slavery and the other free-labor. In the meantime, Douglas shook the Senate with his denunciations of the administration for favoring the South: it was difficult to believe that he was the same man who had lately been hand in glove with the planters of the lower South. Naturally, the Southerners rallied to the defense of Buchanan. Jefferson Davis made some notable speeches in debates with Douglas and the Republicans as well. He was supported by R. M. T. Hunter of Virginia, Robert Toombs of Georgia and Judah P. Benjamin of Louisiana, leading Southerners of the time. The Senate, swept by bursts of passion and ringing with furious charge and counter-charge, was a very different body from the stately

[1] *The Middle Period*, 472.

chamber of Webster and Clay. Davis was clearly the foremost figure on the Southern side, but he cannot be said to have shown wise leadership. He did much to make the breach between the Northern wing of the Democratic party and the Southern irreparable. He steadily played into the hands of the Republicans without knowing it. But as has been said before, Jefferson Davis was much of a statesman and little of a politician. He had ability without shrewdness.

Though Davis's scheme for a Southern Pacific railway was now hopeless, he did not realize this. He gained Buchanan's support for it, as he had Pierce's, but the railroad was swallowed up in the furious Kansas debates that occupied most of the time of Congress and threatened at times to develop into pistol fights. Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico, all went by the board. This was the price of the effort to win Kansas as a slavery state.

The other leaders in the Senate were Douglas and William H. Seward of New York, the creator and head of the Republican party and one of the ablest politicians the United States has ever produced. He announced the "irrepressible conflict" between North and South and attacked planter civilization as if it was something inherently wicked and infamous. So indeed it seemed to the non-Nordic North on the eve of the Civil War. The Northerners, peaceable, orderly, business-like, industrious, could not understand the tropic Nordics, who rode fast horses and hunted and rioted and fought with pistols: passionate, haughty, masterful men, as Nordics have mostly been. They were very generous and very violent. They often treated their slaves with ridiculous over-indulgence, and sometimes they were harsh and cruel to them. They were seldom calculating, logical, practical; ordinarily, they were impulsive, reckless and affection-

ate. Northerners, who had begun to detest dueling in 1804, with Hamilton's fall, really could not understand the Southern Nordic and his antique free, careless existence, with its terrible blood code. Not understanding, they called the South evil: to be different is to be wrong. Seward perfectly represented this attitude. His policy was simply one of opposition to the South on every issue. His sole method was to ride over the South roughshod; he never spoke of the South except in the language of denunciation. Thus, between Davis and the Southerners, playing their hopeless game for Kansas, and Seward and the Northerners, who opposed the South with furious hatred, there was little chance for the small band of politicians whose main aim was to preserve the Union and who were willing to make sacrifices to that end. Douglas, with his incessant abuse of the administration, added the one thing needed to make confusion complete and passion triumphant over reason.

This somewhat second-rate trio of Davis, Douglas and Seward had succeeded the mighty triumvirate of Webster, Clay and Calhoun. As a debater, Davis was superior both to Douglas and Seward, but as a party leader he was incomparably inferior. He was unable to accomplish anything as the head of what may be called the Southern party in the Senate. He lacked cunning and management. All his life he was aiming at great statesmanlike projects which his political incapacity brought to nought. He was anything but a practical politician. He was too proud, too solitary, too sensitive for that. He was really too high-minded for a career in politics; he should have remained a soldier and a planter. Because he could not lead the South effectively in this crisis, the crisis continually grew in seriousness until it ended in secession and war.

The Northern politicians of the period, who included Seward, Wade, Wilson, Hale, Sumner, Chase, Bates, Cameron, and others almost as notable, were abler than Davis, Toombs, Cobb, Hunter, Benjamin, Brown, Stephens and their confrères. This is one of the reasons that the Civil War came when it did. The Southerners, not only outnumbered but outmaneuvered, were driven into a cul-de-sac from which secession was the only escape. The Northern leaders of the time were great men; the country has seldom seen abler. The very natural adulation of Lincoln has somewhat tended to throw into obscurity these politicians who really brought about the situation by which Lincoln profited. His great and picturesque personality has dwarfed characters of significance, which is the habit of history. The Republican leaders were the strongest Nordics of the mid-century, though, with the irony of fate, they were engaged in fighting the non-Nordic battle of industrialism and city civilization against the outdoors and the planter.

The South, handicapped by lack of leadership, was falling into a precarious position. The alliance with the West was now broken, and the South was definitely in a minority. The temper of the Southern people had changed greatly since 1850. They were beginning to believe that they had no real place in the Union, that there would be no peace as long as they remained in the Union. Under the constant denunciation of the North, the Southerners were losing their great love for the Union. It appeared that the two sections would soon be unable to meet in a common parliament. The ordinary business of government was becoming impossible. Consequently, the farthest-sighted Southerners were fast coming to Rhett's view that secession was the only remedy for the disease. Yet the cautious still clung to the Union,

hoping that the country would be saved by some miraculous compromise. Webster and Clay had prevented secession in 1850; why could it not be done again? The Southern Unionists did not realize that years of bitter strife had intensified the crisis and that there were no men to fill the shoes of Webster and Clay.

The extremists in both sections were steadily gaining ground. Between the radicals, Northern and Southern, who were together brewing the war broth, Jefferson Davis appeared as a moderate. He stood for the South, but he was more conciliatory than most Southerners. Beyond doubt, he had some dream of the presidency in 1860, but quite apart from this he was a sincere Unionist. He turned away from secession in 1851 and he never really became a secessionist again. Fate, and not his own volition, put him in the position of a disunion leader. No man in the country, North or South, made greater efforts to avert secession than he did when he saw that it was actually impending.

Yet he did much to bring it about, quite unconsciously. Rhett and Yancey had the hardihood and the clearness of vision to advocate disunion years before it took place and to continue to urge it. Davis, on the other hand, clung to Calhoun's idea of making the South predominant within the Union. Rhett abandoned his master's pet theory because he had penetration enough to see that it was hopeless. Davis lacked Rhett's prevision and his pessimism. He failed to understand the critical nature of the situation. He still demanded Southern rights and still hoped for a united country, things now incompatible. He did not realize that the South had either to give way or to secede—that there was no other choice.

At this time, in the late fifties, the delicate nerves of

Jefferson Davis broke down under the strain of the incessant controversy. His eyes became inflamed and he was tortured by resulting nervous headaches. It is probable that his eyes, chronically infected, were the main cause of Davis's neurasthenia. He finally became practically blind in one eye. In the summer of 1858, he went North for his health and enjoyably mixed politics with recuperation. He appears to have sounded the Northern Democrats on his presidential chances. He made a number of speeches and was treated with great courtesy by Northern audiences. In a period of bitter language, he distinguished himself by temperate and conciliatory utterances. He spoke of his love for the Union, which was wise as well as sincere, and urged the acceptance of the Dred Scott opinion, which was impolitic. He made an excellent, if transitory, impression upon his auditors, who were pleased with his oratory. Rightly. No other public speaker of the time was more convincing in argument and more pleasing in manner than Jefferson Davis. Like Woodrow Wilson, he owed his eminent position largely to his speech-making.

In Boston, he held a love feast with Caleb Cushing and, for a moment, dreamed of reconciliation and peace. "True men," he wrote, "could effect much by giving to the opposite section the views held by the other. The difference is less than I expected." The difference between Davis and Cushing was indeed small; but broad, tolerant, kindly politicians of somewhat easy-going morality like Cushing were few and far between. This is the type of statesman under whom the world gets on best. It is the men with idealistic ambitions and the men with high convictions, who stand on principle and refuse to compromise with wrong, that make wars. Practical politicians seldom do. They live and let live. This

is, to some extent, illustrated in the case of Jefferson Davis. As a young and inexperienced politician in 1851, he had stood for Southern rights to the point of secession. In 1860, as a public man somewhat perverted by the world and corrupted by ambition, he dreaded secession and war. By just so much as he had degenerated from his originally idealistic and austere standard he had come to accept compromise. Indeed, in 1861 he seceded with great reluctance, without any lofty enthusiasm for principle whatever.

If Davis dreamed of the presidency, he did not dream long. John Brown's raid into Virginia, late in 1859, intensified the crisis which must come, as all men knew, with the approaching election of 1860. The raid practically ended the hope of compromise. It gave a powerful impulse to secession by revealing to the bewildered South the hatred felt for it by the North. The South was torn by grief and rage. It could not understand that the Northern hatred for it was natural, even inevitable; just as youth hates age, young civilizations and new institutions hate the past and those who stand for the past. In the non-Nordic, industrialist, democratic, public-school world of 1860, the aristocratic, bond-slavery, rural South was an anachronism, and therefore hateful. But it was anything but a weak and decaying anachronism; it was so vigorous an anachronism that it threatened to turn the scales against modernity and win a notable victory for the old agricultural civilization of the world. It was because of this threat of the tropic Nordics that the hatred of the North for the South was so keen.

Even in 1860, after John Brown's raid, Jefferson Davis did not despair of a peaceable settlement of the difficulties between the North and the South. He was a Unionist and a man whose ambition was to be President of the United

States. Yet he played into the hands of the fomenters of strife and ended by becoming the revolutionary President of the South. There has seldom been a more complete hiatus between purpose and result.

The one man who might have averted secession, by a very curious irony of fate was the man who had precipitated the crisis that threatened to end in secession, Stephen A. Douglas. He was the only Democrat who might have been elected in 1860, and only the election of a Democrat could have kept the states together. In the passion of the hour, the triumph of a sectional party meant separation, and the Republican party was sectional. Douglas was the one great national figure, for he had supporters in every section, many even in the South. If nominated by an undivided Democratic party his chances of election would be good, because he would be certain to carry all the Southern states and some of the Northern and Western. The danger he ran was that of a break between the Northern and Southern wings of the Democratic party similar to the division in the Republican party in 1912.

The break occurred, and Jefferson Davis was as much responsible for it as any other man. He allowed resentment to smother policy, another indication of the fact that he was a poor politician. His influence would probably have sufficed to bring about the nomination of Douglas. He did all in his power to prevent it. His bitterness against Douglas was perfectly human and natural, for Douglas had led the South into a trap and then abandoned it. What Davis failed to realize was that Douglas was substantially right in his new attitude on Kansas. The Dred Scott opinion was really of little value, as Douglas showed, for there was no way of keeping a state a slave state against the will of a

majority of its inhabitants. But the South refused to acquiesce in a defeat that would add four new senators to the number of its enemies in Congress. It had itself, by agreeing to the organization of the two territories, overturned the balance of power in the Senate against itself. No wonder that the South was raging.

Yet Douglas, if he had gulled the South for the benefit of Chicago and the West, was in great need of the South. Only by its support could he hope to be elected. And he was by no means hostile to the South; he was a man of broad sympathies and had married a Southern woman. The South then had a good opportunity to drive a bargain with him. If it had given up Kansas, it could have secured a pledge from Douglas to work for the annexation of Cuba, worth a dozen Kansases to the South. Being the most adroit political manager of the time, Douglas might possibly have acquired the island, which had eluded the amateur diplomacy of Davis, Buchanan, Soulé and Mason. The South had nothing to lose by the election of Douglas but Kansas, already doubly and trebly lost, and much to gain. Clearly, its policy was to bury the hatchet and elect Douglas.

It was not to be expected that Buchanan and the lesser lights of the administration would see this, but Jefferson Davis should have seen it. True, he would have been harshly criticized in the South if he had supported Douglas in 1860, but the criticism would have been temporary and the gain permanent. There are times when a master politician does the unpopular thing, trusting to the inevitable reaction for vindication. Yet timidity did not move Davis to oppose Douglas, but passion. He hated the Illinoisian. "The decency and good sense of the people," he said in reference to Douglas, "must revolt against the chicanery by

which the presidency is sought by certain ambitious demagogues." [1]

With the fate of the country largely in his hands because of his influence with the administration, Jefferson Davis joined in an intrigue of the Democratic leaders to bring about the rejection of Douglas at the nominating convention. Together with President Buchanan and John Slidell and Caleb Cushing, he controlled the national committee of the Democratic party. The committee, far in advance of the convention, planned to defeat Douglas. It named Charleston, South Carolina, as the place for the convention. Charleston, the center of the lower South and the stamping ground of intransigent opinions, was a bad selection for Douglas: it was probably a part of the scheme to jockey him out of the nomination by making the weight of the lower South fully felt, for conventions usually met in border states. The result of the committee's planning was that the lower South prepared to dictate the policy of the Democratic party when the convention met in April, 1860.

It was a notable gathering of politicians in the most picturesque of American cities, the last general muster of the old Democratic party. Charleston was second to no city in the country in culture and charm; probably no other city of the time equaled it. In luxury and enjoyment of life it was quite unique in America. Here the planter aristocracy, in complete control, extended a gracious hospitality to the delegates from the whole country, including Tammany Hall, then much what it is now. Northerners and Westerners fell under the spell of the quaint old town dressed in all the flowery beauty of the Southern spring.

The convention immediately divided into two factions—

[1] *American Historical Review*, 10, 361.

Douglas and anti-Douglas. The main fight, however, was over the platform rather than the candidate. Yancey, the Alabama fire-eater, attempted the blind folly of binding the Northerners and Westerners to the acceptance of the Dred Scott opinion: his platform really consisted of a set of resolutions introduced in the Senate by Jefferson Davis, to wit, that Congress was obliged to protect slavery in the territories. The platform committee actually presented this absurdity to the convention as its report, but the convention revolted. A minority report declaring for popular sovereignty was adopted instead.

Douglas would now have been nominated but for the foolish Democratic rule which requires a two-thirds majority. He had a majority but not such a majority as that. The lower South was able to block his nomination, though it could neither dictate the platform nor name the candidate. At this point Yancey proceeded to wreck the Democratic party. He ventured on the unwarrantable step of leaving the convention because he could not have his own way: a number of fellow fire-eaters dramatically marched out of the hall with him. The lower South sustained their action.

The last hope of averting secession now passed, because the one truly national institution, the Democratic party, was sundered. What was left of the convention went to Baltimore and nominated Douglas. The lower South had a convention of its own at Richmond and nominated John C. Breckinridge, the Vice President. The old Whigs brought out John Bell of Tennessee. The opposition to the Republicans was thus hopelessly divided between Douglas, the Western candidate; Breckinridge, the Southern candidate, and Bell, the candidate of the border states.

Davis had done much to bring about this catastrophe, for

there can be no doubt that he approved of Yancey's action. When Douglas denounced him in the Senate as the destroyer of the Democratic party, in forcing the Dred Scott plank on the platform committee, he answered, rather lamely, that he only asked what the Constitution granted and the Supreme Court confirmed. For once his self-control left him—probably because he was stung by the truth of Douglas's charge—and he used bitter words.

Already the Mississippi senator was beginning to realize his mistake. He had ruined Douglas only to elect Lincoln. He now made a final effort to save the party he had done so much to destroy and to prevent the disruption of the Union. Seeing Douglas, he sought to persuade him to withdraw, along with Breckinridge and Bell, in favor of a single candidate on whom the opposition to Lincoln might unite. Douglas briefly replied that he could not withdraw because he was the only man able to hold the votes of the Northern Democrats. Davis should have seen this in the first place: it was evident to all the Northern politicians and was the reason for their resolute stand for Douglas at Charleston. But Jefferson Davis's principal intellectual defect was lack of foresight. He had clearness of vision, logic, power of analysis and continuity of thought, but singularly little skill in calculating the outcome of events.

Davis supported Breckinridge but took little part in the campaign, which was a foregone conclusion. Lincoln was elected by a large electoral majority but by so small a plurality of the popular vote over Douglas that it is evident the latter would have had an excellent chance if he had been supported by an undivided party. Breckinridge carried the lower South; Bell the border states.

The South was now face to face with the problem of

secession. A hostile administration would soon be added to a largely hostile Congress. Yancey was pleased, Rhett vindicated. The fire-eaters everywhere applauded. But Jefferson Davis was not a fire-eater and he was dismayed. In a letter of November 10, 1860, he counseled delay in withdrawing from the Union unless the lower South was fully united on a plan of action.[1] How different this was from 1851!

The lower South, however, was on the verge of being united. South Carolina was about to secede, and the Gulf states began to move in that direction. Governor Pettus of Mississippi invited the congressmen of that state to meet him at Jackson on November 22, 1860. Six of the seven were present. They made themselves into a formal meeting, and Reuben Davis moved to ask the legislature to call a secession convention. A vote was taken. Jefferson Davis and A. G. Brown, the other senator, and L. Q. C. Lamar voted against it; the other three for it. Pettus cast the deciding vote in the affirmative. He then read a letter from the governor of South Carolina asking whether the pending secession ordinance of that state should go into effect at once or on March 4, 1861. Again Davis voted for delay, and again the governor cast the deciding vote. South Carolina was advised to secede immediately.[2]

Thus Jefferson Davis was not even able to impede a movement which he deplored though he had furthered. On December 14, at Washington, he joined other Southern congressmen in declaring in favor of secession. He had attempted to bring Buchanan to make a statement of the right of secession, but the President balked at this. He did not

[1] Dodd, *Jefferson Davis*, 191.
[2] R. Davis, *Recollections of a Mississippian*, 391.

believe that secession was right or that resistance to secession was right. He had gone as far in aiding the South as he would go. The Southern leaders gave up the hope that the North would acquiesce in secession.

The country was dismayed by the coming break-up. There was a general demand for a compromise that would save the Union, but as is usual in politics the will of the people was not fulfilled. Both houses of Congress appointed compromise committees. Davis, R. M. T. Hunter and Robert Toombs were the Southern members of the Senate committee. Crittenden, the Kentucky successor to Clay's rôle of grand compromiser, had arranged a plan that was acceptable to the South since it gave that section the extension of the Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific. His scheme, therefore, was unacceptable to the North. No basis of negotiation could be found, and the effort to prevent disunion failed. The North did not want a real compromise. It could not afford to extend the Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific, because to do so would have given the South a chance to dominate. In spite of their disadvantage in numbers and resources, the tropic Nordics were so virile and so rapidly re-developing the masterful traits of the Nordic race that it is not impossible that they would have successfully defied the forces of mechanical civilization and made the North a pendant on the South. To accomplish this, they would have sought to conquer Mexico, Cuba and northern South America.

Lincoln was partly responsible for the failure of the compromise proposals, for he advised the Republican leaders to reject them. Doubtless he was right. Compromises could not go on being made every few years: the issue had to be met sooner or later, and there was no reason to postpone it

as it had been postponed from 1820 to 1832 and from 1832 to 1850. A compromise in 1861 would only have been the beginning of a new phase of the great duel between the opposing civilizations.

Jefferson Davis worked in season and out in his effort to secure a compromise. No man labored with more intensity to preserve the Union than Jefferson Davis, soon to be President of the Southern Confederacy. He did not give up hope until the reply of the Republican leaders was a positive refusal to negotiate. Then he resigned his seat in the Senate. On January 5, 1861, he delivered his apologia, his justification of secession in a speech that was the *vale* of the tropic Nordics. A sympathetic audience hung breathlessly on his words. Professor Dodd has declared his farewell to be disappointing, but its somewhat formal defense of the exercise of the right of secession covered intense emotion. When Davis concluded his brief address with touching eloquence and went his way, the old dual republic of the Fathers was at an end.

VI

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

SECESSION had come. Two parties struggled for mastery in the South, secessionists and Unionists, or, to be more accurate, immediate secessionists and coöperationists, who wished to delay until the South had agreed on a common plan of action. Everywhere the immediate secessionists proved stronger, for if secession had to come the people felt that it might as well come at once as to be put off a little longer. It soon became evident that most of the states of the lower South were going out of the Union together. If South Carolina had not promptly taken the lead, secession might have been averted for a considerable time, but the movement of the Palmetto state precipitated the action of the whole lower South. One commonwealth after another hastened to declare its independence.

All patriotic men deplored the disruption and many even in the South opposed it. The break-up of the Union was a sad catastrophe, one of the dark pages of history. The right of states to leave a confederacy, the right of self-determination for the nations of an empire is a doubtful one. The matter is practical rather than theoretical. The United States Constitution might specifically allow secession, and yet secession might be, so far as the political action of millions of men can be, wrong. The experience of humanity shows that mankind has generally been far better off when

organized in great states than when cut up into numerous feeble and petty divisions and that only grave reasons justify the overthrow of unions. Yet there may be cases when not to divide is the greater evil.

It would seem that the secession of the South was such a case, though there is, of course, room for a wide difference of opinion. The North and the South had reached a point where the governmental machinery no longer worked, and the political instincts of the Nordic race suggested a new arrangement. The submission of the South to sectional government in 1861 would have postponed secession but would not have remedied the cause of secession: a civil war, possibly even more disastrous than the one that occurred, would probably have been the final outcome—a war of parties rather than of sections. The opposing forces in American life would likely have clashed in military conflict sooner or later.

The cause of secession lay deeper than slavery, that convenient Satan of American history which has been held responsible for all ills of our past life. The cause of secession was the antagonism of the tropic Nordicism of the lower South for the meddling, non-Nordic industrial civilization of the North. It is to be observed that the upper South did not feel this antagonism so deeply: thus Kentucky, Maryland and Missouri did not secede and Virginia seceded so tardily as seriously to prejudice the secession cause. But in the lower South, where the Nordic was recovering his primeval character, or developing new characteristics, reverting to the type of masterful man which had imposed its will so long on the world, the revulsion against the mechanistic, egalitarian North was very strong. For two generations the two great types of American life had been developing side

by side, but now the question had come as to which was to prevail. Was the South to go its separate way, since it could no longer hope to hold its own in the Union, or was it to be conquered and made an integral part of the North?

The South seceded, in the first place, because of the Nordic instinct of self-government. It is easy to say that a minority should bow to the will of a majority, but such submission may mean suicide. The issues may be so vital that resistance will be the only sane course to take. The minority in 1861 would have been indifferent to the principle of self-government if it had consented to the abandonment of the policy of the balance of power, and the North absolutely insisted on this surrender. Most wars are caused by threats to the balance of power, and this was especially the case in our Civil War. It was essential to the South to have the right to regulate its domestic concerns, a right menaced by the steadily growing anti-slavery agitation.

The bitterness of feeling between the North and South was such that it was beyond reason to expect that slavery would remain unmolested. The North might have given pledges—and sincere pledges, too—that it would not interfere with slavery where it was established, but it must have interfered. Congress would have been driven by public sentiment and the force of events to deal with slavery in the South. The Fugitive Slave law would have been repealed and the interstate slave traffic prohibited. The border states would have been subjected to armed attacks such as the Brown raid; war would have existed under the name of peace, and the most detestable kind of war. The chaotic conditions resulting would have impelled Congress to consider the question of abolition. Eventually slavery would have been abolished.

Yet it would have come to an end under very different conditions from those of 1865. When slavery finally passed from the United States, it did so only after one of the greatest struggles in history. The South, although so much weaker than the North, put up a fight that compelled the admiration of the world. The Nordics, rallying to the defense of the Nordic political institution of local self-government and the Nordic social and economic institution of slavery, showed the spirit and fighting qualities of the race. Nordicism was overthrown but it was not disgraced. But if the Southern planters had been so tame, so lost to the Nordic past as to have submitted to the overthrow of their institutions against their will, they would have deserved the supreme calamities that would have befallen them. It must be remembered that emancipation was only a part of the abolition program. If the South had remained in the Union and submitted to emancipation, negro suffrage would have followed and a great negro egalitarian movement. The Gulf states would have been lost. The Nordic race would have fallen, and fallen utterly. The consequences of resistance were bitter but nothing like so disastrous and demoralizing as this. The South was economically ruined by secession and war but it was spiritually saved.

Thus it will be seen that the South had much reason for its greatly criticized course of action. On the other hand, the North had the best of arguments for its refusal to concur in the right of secession. No matter what the intention of the Fathers may have been in framing the Constitution, seventy years of union had made the American nation an accomplished fact; and the North could not be expected to appreciate the dire necessity that drove the Southern Nordics to secession. The North had no such race problem as

the South. The going of the South meant the wrecking of the great republic founded by Washington and his fellows, and Lincoln would have been weak if he had sanctioned it. Being a strong man, he prepared for war. War, indeed, was the only solution of the matter, for it was a situation where neither side could afford to give way. Because war is so often unnecessary and wrong, we should not lose sight of the fact that in rare cases it is the single honorable resort. The year 1861 was an example of this.

Secession, when it came, was the work of no group of leaders but a spontaneous movement of the planters, supported in large measure by the small farmers. The only state in which the secessionists had difficulty was Georgia, the happiest of the Southern commonwealths. Georgia had no such haughty planters and no such large, neglected poor white population as Virginia and South Carolina, possibly the two least fortunate states of the South. Georgia had the largest slave-owning population of the country: in Georgia the great majority of farmers owned modest estates and held a few slaves. It was a sound, content, moderately prosperous community, originally strongly opposed to disunion. Many of the farmers were still against secession in 1861, and the campaign to control the state convention was stirring. The disunionists were led by Governor Joseph Brown, Robert Toombs and Howell Cobb; the Unionists or delayers by Alexander H. Stephens, Herschel V. Johnson and Benjamin H. Hill. Stephens made a strong plea for delay, declaring that the Constitution provided remedies for all political ills. The influence of Toombs, however, added to the logic of the situation proved decisive, and Georgia seceded.

Toombs was the only Southern leader who had much part in bringing about secession. South Carolina would have

moved without reference to Rhett; Yancey had so little immediate influence in Alabama that he could not get himself elected to the Confederate convention. Davis had nothing to do with the secession of Mississippi. Florida and Louisiana acted spontaneously and apparently without any leadership whatever. But if Toombs had opposed secession Georgia might have delayed so long that the disunion plan would have broken down.

The action of Georgia made secession immediately successful; it was no longer a question whether or no the lower South would follow South Carolina as a unit, but whether the North could hold the border states in the Union. In the first days of 1861, the future of the secession movement seemed problematical, but a few weeks later it was sweeping the South like fire. Later, Virginia, North Carolina, Arkansas and Tennessee joined the lower South, while Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri remained in the Union, snatched as brands from the burning. The republic was torn asunder.

Organization of a new national government followed hard on the action of the individual states. Deputies from the first six seceding commonwealths met at Montgomery, the capital of Alabama, on February 4, 1861. Montgomery was a picturesque little town perched on high bluffs overhanging the beautiful Alabama River; its main street ran from the water to the capitol, a mile away, and sent out spurs of side streets on which verandaed residences stood amidst old-fashioned Southern gardens. The town served well enough for a state center, but its two primitive hotels and its village atmosphere somewhat handicapped it as the capital of a nation. Yet it had the great advantage of being in the center of the lower South, midway between Charleston and

New Orleans, and the Confederates would have done well to make it the permanent capital.

The convention represented the two parties existing at that moment in the South, willing secessionists and unwilling secessionists. That is, one party looked forward with confidence to the Promised Land of a separate national existence, while the other gazed with the dismay of Lot's wife at the receding Sodom of Washington. In January, 1861, the ardent secessionists had been in the saddle as state after state left the Union. But now, in February, the reaction had come, and the lukewarm secessionists actually found themselves in control of the convention. This was largely due to the fact that the delegates were mature politicians, and they did not want disunion. What they wanted was a compromise, and many of them looked on secession merely as a means to bring about a compromise which would gain substantial advantages for the South. They would have welcomed overtures from the North, and if a prompt and emphatic promise of non-interference with slavery had come from Washington it is not improbable that the secession movement would have broken down.

But no such security could be given by the North, and the convention reluctantly proceeded to form a government. In the absence of Yancey, defeated for the Confederate convention by a silly self-denying ordinance of the Alabama secession convention, Rhett, Toombs and Howell Cobb were the leading figures. Yet they had no great influence with the delegates. Rhett, the father of secession, the prophet who had at last come into his own, was so far from being in control that he was actually regarded with suspicion by the convention. Toombs and Cobb, who had brought about the secession of Georgia, were likewise largely without power.

The absence of Yancey, that soul of flame, that being devoid of the fear of consequences, was greatly felt. He might have stirred the crowd of hesitating, compromising delegates into decisive action. It was the great opportunity of Toombs's life, but he did not rise to it. The result was that the convention was conciliatory and dilatory in a situation calling for strong and immediate doing. It failed to see that the Rubicon had been passed and that there was now no turning back. It still hoped to turn back to the Union, and for this reason it appeased the Unionists and flouted the secessionists. What it particularly desired was to present a united front, as if such a thing could be hoped for in a revolution.

As the delegates would not trust the secession leaders, Rhett, Toombs and Cobb, they were hampered by lack of leadership from the beginning. Cobb was elected president of the convention, which removed him from the floor. Toombs was distrusted as being an aspirant to the headship of the government. Other men of mark in the convention were few. Actually, the most powerful member of the convention was Alexander H. Stephens, who was not even a reluctant secessionist but a Unionist who had submitted to the inevitable. He afterward declared that he accepted a seat in the convention solely in order to advocate the adoption of the United States Constitution.[1] His influence was thoroughly unfortunate: it had the effect of arresting the political development of the secession movement and binding it to precedents unsuitable to the emergency.

Stephens was the great prophet of the strict constructionists, and the result of his predominance was that the delegates spent five fateful weeks, which should have been de-

[1] A. H. Stephens, *Pictorial History of the United States*, 588.

voted to war preparations, in constitutional debates in imitation of the convention of 1787. A provisional constitution was adopted and a provisional President and Vice President were elected. Then it would seem the constitution-mongers might have halted until a more convenient season. Not so: the convention passed on to the work of manufacturing a permanent constitution and installing a permanent government.

This finality was slightly premature in view of the fact that the United States government regarded the whole proceedings at Montgomery as illegal and was preparing to resort to force to suppress the new republic. But idealists such as Stephens are seldom disturbed by reality. Theories have for these political Christian Scientists the actuality that hard fact has for other men: their one concern is that plan shall conform to ideal; if it does so they disregard the beating of externality on their dream world. In the worst crises of the Civil War, Stephens wasted his time in denouncing the constitutional violations of a government whose existence depended wholly on the bayonets of the protecting army.

The result of Stephens's ascendency over the throng of delegates who were strongly desirous of getting back to the Union was the adoption of the United States Constitution. With some changes, it became the decalogue of the Confederacy. A few improvements were introduced. The President was elected for six years and was ineligible for reelection. Cabinet members were allowed to speak in Congress. There were some minor differences. But the line of demarcation between the powers of the federal government and the rights of states was not laid down, with the result that at the first considerable exertion of authority on

the part of the President the cry was raised that the constitution was being violated.

Imitation was the order of the day; nothing was original. Confederate States of America was the official title of the republic; and when an executive mansion was obtained it inevitably became the "White House of the Confederacy." Not Green or Yellow or Purple, but White! The revolutionists, many of whom were ex-congressmen, already regretted the fleshpots of Washington. They were not young, vigorous fire-eaters, but tired politicians. They were conservative: at least, they were not creative. That was the first tragedy of the Southern Confederacy.

At length Stephens was satisfied that the new government was sufficiently orthodox to receive his approval, which was, indubitably, a great triumph for the secessionists. Certainly, they should have felt it to be so: they had sacrificed much for that same approval. And the approval was a very temporary matter, for in less than a year Stephens was in violent opposition to the government he had done so much to establish. It would have been far better if the secessionists had gone their own way, defying opposition or overawing it, instead of attempting the impossible task of unifying every shade of opinion in support of the revolutionary government.

The Republicans, just establishing themselves in Washington, must have rejoiced at the folly of the Confederates. The Constitution, as they well knew, was their chief weakness: it was a bar to the ruthless prosecution of a great war. They were hampered by it until they cleverly devised the theory of the presidential war powers as a means of getting around it. Likewise, in 1917, the Constitution was sus-

pended and a temporary dictatorship established to meet a crisis far less dangerous than that of 1861.

The disunionists had no such difficulty to surmount. They went into their movement unhampered. They thus had an admirable opportunity to devise a provisional constitution of elastic powers, leaving the question of the eternal organic law until independence had been won. It was a chance to practice initiative in politics, to provide a system corresponding to actual needs. What the South needed at the moment was a simple parliamentary government that would keep the power in the hands of the planter politicians, a one-chamber Congress with strong committees and an army commander responsible to Congress. The strength of the South lay in the Nordic planters, who formed a large oligarchy. They were the makers of the new republic and they should have remained its rulers.

But the worn politicians in the convention, used to the institutions of the United States, did not rise to any originality. In obedience to habit and in response to the outcries of Stephens that the government must be according to the Fathers—that it must be a reproduction of the perfect United States model—they set up a single ruler over themselves. That is, they established the monarchical form of republic, like the United States, which does well enough when a great leader appears but which is the worst possible kind of government when the strength of a country and its prosperity depend not on an individual but a class. The Nordic planters, represented by politicians who did not represent their spirit, thus committed political suicide. They made a one-man government and thereby paved the way for their downfall.

A king was demanded, and the question now was who

should be Saul. No doubt a number of men briefly hoped. Alabama made overtures in Yancey's behalf to Virginia, which, as hesitating on the brink of secession but not yet seceding, was particularly powerful, but the Virginia politicians did not favor the fire-eater.[1] The convention of lukewarmists never even considered him. The very fact that he had precipitated secession damned him in their eyes. Rhett felt that his claims were paramount and may have been sanguine for a moment. Secession had confirmed his superior foresight. What he had long preached had finally come to pass. Who could better care for the infant nation than its own father? Unfortunately for himself, Rhett was in a false position. South Carolina had led the way in secession. If that state now brought forward a candidate for the presidency, it could not escape the imputation of self-interest. If the other states were willing to evince their gratitude by elevating a South Carolinian to the chief magistracy, Rhett's ambition would be gratified and the secession cause would be led by the original secessionist. If the other states did not so choose, South Carolina could do nothing.

The other states did not want the original secessionist. With Rhett as President there could be no hope of compromise and return to the Union, and this was what a majority of the convention desired. The South Carolina delegation was inclined to give the prize to Georgia, the largest of the seceding states and the most lukewarm: Georgia must be bound at all hazards. And there is a possibility that Georgia could have named the President if it had united on Robert Toombs, the foremost all-round public man of the South. The Georgians, however, were divided between

[1] J. W. Dubose, *Life and Letters of William Lowndes Yancey*, 586.

Toombs and Cobb and even thought of Stephens. T. R. R. Cobb, a Georgia delegate, declares that Alabama, Mississippi and Florida were for Jefferson Davis; Louisiana and Georgia for Cobb; and South Carolina divided between Cobb and Davis.[1] This statement probably somewhat exaggerates Cobb's strength.

The South Carolina delegation seems to have decided the matter. Rhett had no candidate and he knew that his own election was hopeless. Robert Barnwell and James Chestnut, Jr., late senator, actively supported Davis, while Lawrence Keitt preferred Cobb. Barnwell approached his kinsman, Rhett, in Davis's behalf. He admitted that the Mississippian was not a great man but thought that his force of character would lend weight to the government.[2] Rhett demurred. He now disliked and distrusted Davis. What particularly moved his misgivings was Davis's reluctance in the secession movement, for, singular as it may seem to-day, Davis was still believed by many to be a Unionist. In 1851, Davis had stood for secession: in 1861, he worked strenuously to stave it off. Rhett was angered by a rumor that he had shed tears on leaving the Senate. In the end, Barnwell wrung a reluctant consent from Rhett. Almost at the same time, Florida, Alabama and Louisiana declared for Davis.

On the night preceding the election the state delegations conferred separately. A rumor that Georgia preferred Cobb to Toombs seems to have ended the latter's chances.[3] Cobb never really had a chance. The next morning the Georgia delegates were dumbfounded to hear that four

[1] *Southern History Association Publications*, 9, 277.
[2] *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 1, 101.
[3] Johnston and Browne, *Life of Alexander H. Stephens*, 390.

states were for Davis. This meant his election. Toombs, who expected to be chosen, was incredulous and sent out to confirm the news. When this was found to be true, the Georgians decided to make the election unanimous. In such fashion, and not without some difference of opinion, Jefferson Davis was chosen provisional President of the Confederacy.

Why was he elected? He was not present and he made not the slightest effort to obtain the office. His election was partly due to the fact that he had been the Southern leader in the Senate and a debater of power and resource. But Toombs had been almost equally prominent in the Senate and he had other qualifications which Davis lacked. What was mainly determinative was Davis's military reputation. While the majority of delegates hoped that secession would proceed without war, they yet feared that war would come and wanted a soldier for a leader. Buena Vista and four years of the portfolio of War seemed conclusive to them. They did not doubt that an executive with military training was the man for the place.

Yet another element entered in the matter. What did most to defeat Toombs was the fact that he was a secessionist, that he was believed to be opposed to compromise. Now, Davis had worked for a compromise to the last possible moment and had resigned his seat in the Senate only with much reluctance. The lukewarmists, then, favored Davis because they still hoped that it was possible to come to some terms with the United States government and they thought that Davis, the compromiser, would do all in his power to effect that desired consummation.

Rhett and Toombs were both bitterly disappointed, especially Toombs, who had hoped until the last. Neither

man entirely recovered, though Toombs played a part of some importance in later events. No one regrets that Rhett was passed by. He was a great thinker, but he was a realist and unpopular—cold, saturnine, scornful of democracy, indifferent to the past of America, planning the tropic empire of the South, careless of the means by which that empire was to come into being. His powerful intellect went for nought, possibly because of his unpolitical temperament, possibly because of his lack of humanness.

It is otherwise with the more lovable Toombs. The South has always tended to regret that he was not chosen. He was a man of great ability and of force of character. He was not only a lawyer and orator but an economist and financier. His robust health enabled him to do an incredible amount of work. He was a man of action, if not a soldier; a popular leader in a greater degree than any other Southerner; and, above all, a bold revolutionist, ready for daring measures. Somewhat unconsciously, the convention rejected this red-blooded business man and practical politician for the neurotic and scholarly Davis, who was much less able to endure the tremendous labors of the head of a revolutionary government. Opinion was by no means unanimous as to his fitness for the office. T. R. R. Cobb said of him, "He is not *great* in any sense of the term. The power of *will* has made him what he is." [1] But this is to say that he was a great character, if not a great mind. History has been much more made by great characters than by great minds.

It is probable that Jefferson Davis was the best choice the convention could have made. Toombs was able, but he had the cardinal defects of a violent temper and a want

[1] *Southern History Association Publications*, 9, 281.

of self-control. His habits were convivial, a fact that is said to have influenced the convention. He had amateurish military conceptions which he would, no doubt, have sought to force on his generals. All in all, Davis was the flower of the field that included no first-rate individuals, but only Toombs, Cobb, Rhett, Yancey and Stephens. The mistake the secessionists made was not in their presidential selection but in having a President of the United States model at all. Davis was the best man they could have chosen in the absence of a great leader, but they should not have had an all-powerful chief magistrate. If they had kept the reins in their own hands, they might have waited for the great man to appear. As it was, they conferred the pallium on one who did wonderfully well in many ways but who lacked the genius qualities necessary for success.

The imitation of the United States government was as unnecessary as it was unfortunate. While the disunionists of 1861 did not measure up to the generation of Calhoun and Polk, the coterie that included Toombs, Rhett, Cobb, Barnwell, Yancey, B. H. Hill, Wigfall, Benjamin, Slidell, Keitt, Jacob Thompson, A. G. Brown, Hunter, Wise, Vance and Breckinridge was abundantly able to have conducted a national government and devised a foreign policy. Yet the delegates, in obedience to an overmastering impulse of imitation, imposed the monarchical United States Constitution on the new-born country. Possibly they did not realize that they were making the Confederacy a one-man government, that in time of war Congress would necessarily sink to be a mere adjunct of the executive, who would overshadow everything. Signs are not wanting that the Confederate leaders thought that Jefferson Davis would take advice, that a group of men might exercise control through

him. If so, they were soon undeceived. Jefferson Davis was the last possible man to take dictation. Very quickly the leaders found themselves relegated to seats in a Congress whose deliberations no one regarded or hanging around anterooms seeking to obtain favors from a chief who coldly let them understand his complete mastery.

Yet the cup of folly was not full. Not satisfied with having legislated themselves to nothingness, the delegates went on to choose as Vice President Alexander H. Stephens, the leading Southern opponent of secession. More henbrained expediency was never seen. A dyspeptic is the last person to lead a revolution, because revolutions require optimism; but the dyspeptic Stephens had been dragged into this revolution sorely against his will. He reluctantly consented to join a movement in which he did not believe and was rewarded for his lack of faith by being elected to the second place in the government over the heads of real secessionists after being allowed to dictate the form of government. The delegates thought that the election of Stephens was a clever stroke, that it bound the lukewarmists and Unionists to the Confederacy. What it actually accomplished was the handicapping of the revolution by a man who did not believe in it and who never really became a Confederate until the end of the Confederacy, when, there being no longer any use in it, he made an effective defense of the right of secession. Few more futile beings have ever lived.

Stephens was a lawyer and politician of ability and a singularly high and honorable man, but his mentality had been arrested in 1850. The compromise of that year was his idea of statesmanship. He did not comprehend that the South in 1861 had all the constitutional protection pos-

sible under the circumstances—that legal guarantees were worthless in face of the Northern conviction of the unrighteousness of slavery—and hugged the delusion until Appomattox that the Southern states might return to the Union if given additional pledges. This was the idea of the Confederate convention in the early spring of 1861, but it was promptly abandoned by practical men after the bombardment of Sumter. He continually opposed the most necessary military measures, such as conscription, and actually advanced the lunacy that the army should be disbanded in winter and reassembled in spring. He strengthened the states' rights opposition to the national government in every way and worked ardently to foster dissatisfaction with the administration. All in all, he probably did as much as any individual, save Grant and Sherman, to bring about the fall of the Confederacy. So much for the great policy of conciliating the opponents of secession by electing their head Vice President!

But what of the man who was given the chief place? Jefferson Davis was in his rose garden at Brierfield when a messenger came with the news of his election. He stood white and silent, torn by conflicting emotions, overwhelmed and, perhaps, a little elated. He tells us that he was depressed and disappointed, that it had been his ambition to command the Mississippi troops, a command to which he had already been appointed. However, a nature so self-confident and ambitious could not but have thrilled at the vista of glory and grandeur that opened before his eyes. He saw himself the founder of a new nation, surpassing Washington—a great historic figure.

What was the man as we see him after more than six decades? His contemporaries could not accurately meas-

ure him. They put the burden on him in full trust in his brain and character: on him depended the future of Nordic civilization—whether it was to recrudesce and triumph over industrialism or wither, like Jonah's gourd, before the forces of modern life. Was receding Nordicism, slowly being strangled by industry and equality, to emerge once more as a world power or had it come to the end? It depended on the newly elected President.

Jefferson Davis had been many things: soldier, planter, senator, Secretary of War. He had shone conspicuous in all. As a soldier he had won fame at Buena Vista. As a planter, he had built up a fine estate and trained model slaves. As Secretary of War, he had increased the efficiency of the United States army. As a senator, he had come to be the foremost debater on the Southern side. A brave man, physically and morally, Davis would have made an admirable brigade or division commander. He had executive capacity. He was a splendid public speaker, and his information was very varied and very deep. He was well educated, with a cool, logical, clear brain. In many respects, he was a good choice for head of the new government.

His chief deficiency, as has been mentioned before, was as a politician. Jefferson Davis lacked cunning, foresight, knowledge of human nature, all of which together make up the politician. Politically, he was doctrinaire, not practical. Satisfied of the rightness of his position, he was sometimes surprised by the unhappy results of his acts. He had striven for a decade to accomplish certain great political objects, and had failed. It had been his main ambition to win territory for the South. Accomplishment had not followed. In the contest of wits he had

proved inferior to Douglas, who had cozened him into approving the Kansas-Nebraska bill. That mistake had ruined everything. Kansas was not won for the South and the Missouri Compromise line was not extended to the Pacific. Davis had sought to write the Dred Scott opinion into the Democratic platform of 1860, but again he had failed. He had attempted to thwart Douglas and yet prevent the election of Lincoln: he had merely insured Lincoln's success by splitting his own party. He had made great efforts to avert secession by an eleventh-hour compromise, but in vain. In everything in which order, logic and strength of will lead to success—as in debate and administration—he had been successful: in everything in which mastery of men, cold calculation and shrewd manipulation are needful he had failed. He could not make the marionettes dance to his bidding.

In the superlative effort of his life he also failed. Once more it was his inability as a political leader that played a large part in his undoing. No sooner had the planter politicians set him up over them than they turned against him. They hated the government they themselves had made, and Davis was not the man who could bind them to himself by chains of personal loyalty stronger than any constitutional right. They failed him. No doubt Davis made mistakes, but any one in his position would have made mistakes. It was the part of the politicians who had elected him to stand by him. But foremost in criticism and denunciation was Stephens, who was mainly responsible for the establishment of the United States Constitution over the Confederacy and who, the moment the President asserted the large powers supposed to be conferred on him by that instrument, raised the cry of unconstitutionality.

Thus, Jefferson Davis from the first was in the difficult position of a ruler who exerts legal powers grudged by his subordinates and who lacks the address to win those subordinates to his support. For this reason he was forever being driven to fall back on his "constitutional rights," while being denounced as a violator of the constitution himself.

What was the balance of his virtues and defects? He had great positive virtues: dignity, honor, courage, industry. He was single-minded in his devotion to his cause. He had a sound military education and a considerable talent for war. He was, ordinarily, a good judge of men, though liable to make bad mistakes at times. He had too much rather than too little will: his determination overstayed the consent of fate. He was apt to stand rocklike on some wrong decision. He had administrative ability. He inspired respect, though not affection or even liking.

His faults were those of a bookish, solitary nature which has not been toughened by the shocks of life. He was sensitive, vain, egotistical, open to flattery. Men such as Lincoln who have risen to greatness in spite of a hostile environment discount vanity: one rebuff more or less means little to those accustomed to rebuffs. But thin-skinned, undisciplined natures of the type of Jefferson Davis are maddened by reproof and shriveled by ridicule. Used to praise and consideration, they look on criticism as a sort of crime. Pride is their shipwreck: they prefer ruin to admitting a mistake. And in Davis's case sensitiveness led to jealousy; he stood out for his full rights and privileges when he would have done well to rid himself of some of his responsibilities. Yet it must not be forgotten, in judging him, that his position was a terrible one, ground, as he was, between the

millstones of a North denouncing him as a traitor and a South proclaiming him an autocrat. He was never popular, never the head of a party. He always stood much alone. It is not to be wondered, then, that he gave way sometimes to his feelings, but that he endured so much abuse and disloyalty with so few surrenders to human weakness. In spite of his temperament, he developed much patience, much capacity to bear detraction, much forbearance. He won some notable victories over his failings. But he could not quite rise to the heroic level demanded by his difficulties; he could not become the leader to inspire a despondent nation; he could not become the genius able to uphold a losing cause. He failed in a position where only a very great man could have succeeded.

At the time of his election to the presidency, Jefferson Davis was not well known to the masses in the South. For this reason, possibly, his election was received with much applause. He was the man of mystery, of whom everything was expected. He did nothing to dampen this enthusiastic estimate. Always dignified, he charmed the people as he addressed them, American-fashion, from the rear platform of the train that bore him to Montgomery. His slim, boyish, graceful figure, martially erect, and his handsome, clear-cut features made him hosts of admirers, as well as the music of his oratory. In appearance he was now at his best, for his was a face peculiarly fitted to express the full vigor of manhood. The heavy, square chin, thin lips, high cheek bones, hollow jaws, broad forehead, beautifully formed aquiline nose and long skull were typically Nordic, while the coloring of skin, eyes and hair showed the dark Welsh breed. His face, indeed, was impressive and unusual. Pollard speaks of his "wizard physiognomy."

The crowds that flocked to the stations to hear him, in daytime and in the glare of torchlight at night, were in a holiday mood, for this matter of nation-making was a pleasant excitement. Sometimes the new President delighted them with confident words, but he was too clear-sighted and too honest to be very cheering, and he told the clamorous throngs that a long war lay ahead of them. It was springtime in the land of magnolias, and the people did not believe him. Was there any doubt of the right of a sovereign state to secede?

At Montgomery he was met with enthusiasm, for the planter politicians did not yet realize how they had stultified themselves. A great crowd marched behind him up the mile-long street to the capitol, where Yancey himself extended a formal welcome with the statement that the man and the hour had met. At the inauguration next day, by a singular irony in the light of what was to follow, Rhett delivered the address. Thus the father of secession crowned the monarch he was soon to disown. This was Rhett's last great appearance. He, the most unusual public man of his day, ran for Congress in 1863 and was defeated. Such was the end of his tragic career.

Davis's brief inaugural was a plea for peace. "War," he declared in sounding tones, "would be a policy so detrimental to the civilized world, the Northern states included, that it could not be dictated by even the strongest desire to inflict punishment upon us." If the North resorted to arms, "the sufferings of millions will bear testimony to the folly and wickedness of our oppressors."[1] Writing to his wife of the inauguration, he said, "The audience was large and brilliant, and upon my weary heart were showered smiles,

[1] Dubose, *Life of Yancey*, 587.

plaudits, and flowers; but beyond these I saw troubles and thorns innumerable." [1]

Jefferson Davis showed the effects of months of worry. His spare figure was almost emaciated; his features had sharpened; his thin lips were compressed; the square jaw was still more prominent. The last trace of youth had gone from his face, which had become the austere, magnificent face of the war portraits.

One who met him at the time describes him thus: "The President is a small-sized, thoughtful-looking gentleman, neatly dressed in a full suit of gray domestic cloth. His manners are simple yet dignified, and his greeting cordial but quiet. . . . He spoke with the frankness of a soldier rather than in the constrained manner of the diplomatist. While deploring the possibility of hostilities between the North and South, and admitting the folly of an appeal to arms to settle controverted questions of government in this civilized age and country, nothing escaped him reflecting in the least on the North. . . . His whole tone during the interview seemed to be one of regret that the persistent fanaticism of the North should have estranged two sections which were, in most respects, congenial to each other." [2]

Upon his entrance on the presidency, Davis began to suffer from his limitations, which had not handicapped him in the Senate. He found himself confronted by the double labor of creating an administration and preparing for war. Governmental problems pressed for solution. He had little knowledge of commerce and finance. He had never been popular with the crowd, even in Mississippi. He did not

[1] Varina Davis, *Jefferson Davis, a Memoir*, 2, 33.
[2] *Reminiscences of Richard Lathers*, 164.

understand the arts of demagogy, so useful on occasions. He awed men to do his will but did not win them. He knew little of European politics, suddenly become important to America. He prided himself on his military information, but he had been out of the army too long to be an up-to-date soldier. He had never possessed a real aptitude for military life, though he was a good fighter: his mental habits were literary and forensic. Poe would say, no doubt, that a general is the ideal union of poet and mathematician. Davis did not measure up to this definition: his mathematical faculty was weak, and he was always poor at exact calculation. He had imagination, but that had been dulled by official life. His real significance had come to lie in speech rather than in action. He was, above all things, a debater; and he had become President of the South largely because of his skill in argument. He belonged to the world of ideas more than to that of deeds. Now he faced a situation in which political ideas and constitutional arguments were of no importance—which demanded, instead, executive initiative, military talent and man-managing genius.

A whole government had to be built, for nothing existed except the convention, now become the provisional Congress of the Confederacy. But the Nordic is never better than at political creation, and Davis at once plunged into the work of forming an administration. He took up the matter of cabinet appointments. As usual in such cases, there was too much haste. Congress had spent weeks in dilettante constitutional debates after going about the election of a President with a rapidity suggesting levity. Davis now, in his cabinet appointments, acted rapidly and with an insufficient understanding of the importance of the matter. He illustrated his fundamental incapacity as a

practical politician by allowing political considerations to determine the choice of his ministers.

People have often wondered why Jefferson Davis did not select a stronger cabinet. Better men were available, and Davis was usually pretty sound in his estimate of character and ability. Political availability, not merit, was the determining factor in his choice. He was filled with the same futile idea of expediency that led the convention to allow Stephens to make the constitution and then to elect him Vice President. He wished to combine all the states and all the leading interests in the South in support of the administration. Great men must be conciliated, every state must have something.

There was Yancey, the leading fire-eater: he could not be ignored without peril, though he was not well qualified for any cabinet position. He was an orator, not an administrator. Davis sent for him soon after reaching Montgomery and offered him a portfolio—probably the Attorney-Generalship,[1] the least important cabinet place—or the headship of a commission about to be sent to Europe to obtain recognition of the Confederacy, an appointment for which Yancey was entirely unfit. Yancey, not caring for a worthless cabinet position, chose to go to Europe, at the same time suggesting a portfolio for a friend, Leroy Pope Walker.[2] Davis purchased, or thought that he purchased, Yancey's aid by naming Walker for the most important place of all, the Secretaryship of War. He had considered for this office Braxton Bragg, who was a trained soldier. Walker was quite unknown, and the President would never have thought of giving him anything except as a peace offering to Yan-

[1] *Southern History Association Publications*, 9, 278.
[2] Dubose, *Life of Yancey*, 588.

cey, who was still somewhat sore over his failure to be chief magistrate.

Robert Barnwell had done much to make Davis President and Barnwell was a kinsman of the terrible Rhett, who owned the leading newspaper in the South. The Barnwell-Rhett influence meant South Carolina, and Rhett nursed a deep disappointment. Davis offered Barnwell the portfolio of State, which as the most elevated cabinet post belonged of right to South Carolina, but Barnwell declined it. He, like Yancey, however, had his own nominee: he suggested Christopher Memminger for Secretary of the Treasury. Davis at once reconsidered his own plan, which called for Robert Toombs for the Treasury. He made Memminger Secretary of the Treasury, not because he knew anything about him or supposed him to be a good man for the place but because Barnwell asked it. Thus a small South Carolina politician received one of the most responsible posts of all.[1]

With South Carolina out of the way, Georgia had to be considered. Toombs had been selected for the Treasury, an office for which he was admirably fitted, for he was one of the best-versed economists in the United States. But the Treasury had been bestowed, and besides anything less than the premiership was hardly worthy of the man who had expected the presidency and who was, in many respects, the leading Southerner. It was necessary to bind the defeated rival. Toombs reluctantly consented to be Secretary of State: after his great disappointment it was poor consolation.

The other states to be considered were Florida, Louisiana and Texas. Stephen B. Mallory of Florida became Secretary

[1] *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, I, 104.

of the Navy because he had been chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs in the United States Senate. Judah P. Benjamin, late senator from Louisiana, was given the small place of Attorney-General which Yancey had declined. John H. Reagan of Texas became Postmaster-General. Thus, all the original states of the Confederacy and all the important personal factions of the lower South were taken care of.

The later comers, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Arkansas, received nothing at first. If the Confederacy had shown any originality, instead of being a slavish imitation of the United States, it would have added cabinet posts: Secretary of Commerce, Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of Transportation, Secretary of Slaves and Indians, and perhaps others. But the men who made the Confederacy were unable to escape the conviction that the government of the United States, as it then was, was the last word in human wisdom. So they added nothing.

What was the strength of this cabinet, appointed almost wholly on political grounds and with little thought of efficiency? Toombs, the premier, while a very able man, would have done much better as envoy to Europe than as Secretary of State. He chafed so under Davis's too obvious mastership that he did no good and presently resigned to enter the army, where he served with great gallantry but with no especial success. In this way the services of one of the foremost men in America were lost to the government, which did know how to use him. Memminger, the Secretary of the Treasury, was one of those restless mediocrities who are forever pushing their way into places too large for them. Lawyer, banker, philanthropist, minor politician, he was a typical prominent citizen and an admirable average man. His routine, unimaginative industry and econ-

omy were out of place in the Confederate treasury. He was a sound business man in a place demanding boldness and originality, a shopkeeper in a promoter's shoes. The little dried-up, side-whiskered lawyer who looked like a character out of Dickens, the eminently respectable vestryman of St. Somebody's, was hardly the inspired experimenter needed to guide to port the leaky bark of Confederate finance. He was a consistent failure all the way through.

Mallory was exceedingly unpopular, but he was in many respects a good appointment. Beyond doubt he was a man of talent and initiative. While the United States government, with unlimited resources at its disposal, was contented with a navy of wooden sailing vessels and actually had to have the *Monitor* rammed down its throat, Mallory was fishing up a sunken hulk and building the first ironclad. He also improvised rams on the Mississippi which might have played a great part in the war if there had been anything to make them of but logs and condemned boilers. The Confederate navy was the creation of genius.

Walker, the Secretary of War, was a conscientious person not without parts, but he was superseded by Jefferson Davis, who, for a time, and indeed through a considerable part of the war, looked on the department as his particular province. Walker was not happy in his position and resigned at an early date, no doubt to the President's relief. John H. Reagan, the Postmaster-General, was a good executive who did about as well as any one could have done with the somewhat hopeless Confederate post office.

The last was first. Benjamin had been given the small place of Attorney-General because Louisiana had to have something. For some months he kicked his heels as minister of justice of a nation that had no law cases. He might

well have resigned in disgust and fallen into oblivion, for he was no soldier. But Benjamin was a subtle, astute, time-serving politician bent on rising. He used his gifts so well that he climbed out of justice into the Secretaryship of War and, when he proved a failure there, continued on up to the portfolio of State. Here he was at home, for no man in the South had better diplomatic talents or a wider knowledge of European affairs.

In general, it may be said that Toombs was so restless and unhappy as to be useless; that Mallory, Benjamin and Reagan were good appointments, and that Walker and Memminger were weak. No figure stood out as at all remarkable. The cabinet compared unfavorably with that on the other side of the Potomac, which included Seward, Chase, Bates and later Stanton. Jefferson Davis, seeking to be politically shrewd in a great crisis, succeeded merely in getting a weak administration. Everything should have been sacrificed for efficiency in such an hour. But Davis was no politician and, being none, he failed to see that what the country demanded was a strong and able government. It was not a matter of soothing state pride but of inspiring a nation.

These days in Montgomery were crowded with activity for Davis. He lived in a plain house near the government building, where he spent fifteen out of the twenty-four hours. He rose early, worked until breakfast at home and then went to his office.[1] Midnight often found him at his desk. He was very accessible. Cabinet members and other officials came without ceremony, and strangers were merely announced by an usher. It was the perfection of democratic simplicity, an improvement on Jefferson himself.

[1] T. C. De Leon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 40.

Davis exerted such arts of management as he was master of. "He is very chatty and tries to be agreeable," wrote T. R. R. Cobb.[1] Wishing to send an envoy to Tennessee, which had not yet seceded, he summoned Henry W. Hilliard, a politician of that state. When Hilliard agreed to go to Nashville to hurry up secession, Davis shook him warmly by the hand and invited him to attend a cabinet meeting. On Hilliard's return from his mission, Davis greeted him most cordially. "Mr. Hilliard, you have transcended my expectations," he said enthusiastically.[2]

Sometimes Varina Davis helped out her husband's diplomacy. Davis chose the rather crusty T. R. R. Cobb as a special envoy to Arkansas, to bring about the secession of that wavering state. Cobb declined two invitations to undertake the mission. On the second of these occasions, the President and his wife joined Cobb at breakfast, and Mrs. Davis charmed the Georgian by taking a great interest in his family, inquiring about the several children. Notwithstanding, Cobb held out against her blandishments and did not go to Arkansas.[3]

The President's industry would have been more commendable if it had not been largely misdirected. Most of his time was spent on details of appointments—in passing on commissions of second lieutenants and similar small things. The result was that there was insufficient time for the consideration of large matters. The prime need was money, and Davis left the financial policy entirely to Memminger. Memminger, fiendishly industrious and thoroughly commonplace, followed the line of least re-

[1] *Southern History Association Publications*, 9, 277.
[2] H. W. Hilliard, *Politics and Pen Pictures*, 330.
[3] *Southern History Association Publications*, 9, 284.

sistance, falling back on the time-honored expedient of credit money and making no effort to establish a secured currency. It was a natural temptation, for so strong was the credit of the Confederate government that treasury notes exchanged at par with gold for some months and did not seriously decline until the end of 1861.

The opponents of Davis and Memminger later pointed out, with bitter satisfaction, that no effort was made to build a monetary system on the resources of the South, raw materials, by exportation in 1861. Probably one-third of the cotton crop of 1860 was available, besides other products. The whole crop of 1861 could have been exported, since the blockade of the ports did not become really effective until well in 1862. Ships were obtainable in 1861: a fleet of steamers was offered to the South at a low price. Besides, there would have been many European cargo carriers if high freight rates had been tendered at first. It would not have been difficult for the South to export enough cotton for a credit of many millions of dollars, a credit which, in itself, would almost have insured the success of the currency.

In reply to this criticism, Memminger rather effectively showed that a large number of steamers would have been needed for exportation if the government had bought cotton at the beginning of the war and attempted to send it abroad. This is true, and it might seem that Memminger did all that was practicable under the circumstances. Yet such was not the case. It would, indeed, have been difficult for the South to export the whole cotton crop at once; but it might have purchased the cotton and used it as security for a European loan, exporting it from time to time and with a part of the borrowed money purchasing steamers

for further exportation. The South could have raised $50,000,000 in 1861, with which it might have purchased arms and munitions and procured agents and sympathizers in the capitals of Europe. That it did not do so was due to the over-cautious, wholly uninspired financial policy of the government.

Jefferson Davis was not primarily at fault for the South's failure to utilize its one great monetary resource while there was yet time. He had so little knowledge of economics and finance that he was driven to rely on the Secretary of the Treasury, who, unfortunately, did not measure up to the demand. Memminger failed, partly because he was a victim of an idea common in the South at that time and shared by Rhett himself—the famous "Cotton is King" delusion. According to this theory, it was the true policy of the South to cut off the cotton supply of Europe in order to force the latter to intervene in behalf of the Confederacy. The scheme might have worked but for considerations the theorists ignored: to wit, that the Unionists might be able to take cotton by force or that Southerners might be willing to sell it to them. The result was that the cotton supply was not cut off; it constantly increased as the area occupied by the Union armies enlarged. Thus, for the sake of an untried theory, the Confederate government allowed the golden months of 1861 to pass without attempting a cotton loan or the exportation of cotton in large amounts.

Jefferson Davis did not rise above the "Cotton is King" economy, giving full support to Memminger. Largely because of Memminger's delusion, the South resorted to paper currency instead of laying up treasures in Europe: with enormous assets, it had no resource but credit money. There

can be no doubt that the Union blockade was a great factor in the winning of the war, but that it was so important was, in no small measure, due to Memminger's action in keeping cotton at home and attempting to conduct the government wholly on borrowing. The government looked on for months while the blockade was being put into effect.

In the end, the South adapted itself to the blockade to a considerable extent. Not until late in 1862 did it become seriously troublesome. In 1863 it was a genuine menace, though large quantities of arms were nevertheless imported. In 1864 blockade-running largely triumphed over blockading. In the autumn months of that year, before the fall of Fort Fisher, an enormous amount of military goods, along with other imports, poured into the South.[1]

Not only did the government fail to make a loan in Europe early in the war, but it also attempted little taxation while the country was still able to bear it. Incredible as it may seem, the Confederacy conducted a great war for four years on no other real resources than a few million dollars of specie borrowed from the banks or seized in a branch mint, a few million dollars borrowed in Europe at a later time, and a small sum raised by cotton exportation. The amount of real money spent by the Confederate government in the Civil War would not have bought toothpicks for the American army in 1917.

From this it would appear that fiat currency is by no means an impotent instrument so long as the confidence of the people is not entirely broken. In 1861 Confederate paper had no more behind it than in 1864, but in 1861 it passed at par with bullion and three years later at an enormous depreciation. The difference was rather one of

[1] Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, 2, 262.

hope than of redundancy. In 1861 hope was high; in 1864 it was running low. If the South had won, the redemption of a billion dollars of paper currency would not have been a very serious matter.

The financial methods of the government, when joined to military and political mistakes, were destined to prove fatal. The South was a raw-material country, almost wholly without manufactures. Its problem was to secure an exchange for raw materials of manufactured articles in sufficient quantities to supply the main needs of the army and of the populace. If it could be kept from exchange, its defeat was likely: if it could exchange, its success was almost assured. The government did not realize its opportunity to export raw materials in the opening months of the war; it also failed to buy cotton in large quantities in order to raise a loan and secure the currency. If Confederate paper could have been redeemed in Europe even at a large depreciation, it would have continued to be valuable on account of the patriotism of the Southern people. As it had absolutely nothing behind it, it collapsed, and its collapse had much to do with the downfall of the South. The people starved and used worthless rag money with the wharves piled high with products for which Europe was clamoring.

Yet at the beginning the prospects of the Confederacy were glorious. It had begun its career under auspicious omens. The states of the lower South had acted with promptness and vigor, while the North was torn by dissensions. A government had been formed at Montgomery, headed by one of the most brilliant and picturesque figures in American public life. For the moment Davis overshadowed Lincoln, for Lincoln had not yet had the oppor-

tunity to show that he was the greater man. The future of the North seemed cheerless. Backed up against Canada, the North could not expand, while the South had the southern end of North America and the whole magnificent continent of South America to itself.

The outside world thought of America largely in terms of cotton, which was the main export and chief source of wealth: America was the cotton country. The English upper classes, strongly Nordic themselves, naturally sided with the Nordic spirit and institutions of the South. The industrial classes as inevitably sympathized with the North. The government was neutral. Yet the attitude of the British government was full of menace to the Union and of promise to the Confederacy. The break-up of the republic might mean the winning of the South as a sort of vassal state, a tariffless market for English manufactures. If the South was willing to accept this position it had a chance to gain the help of England, in spite of Prince Albert's strong preference for the North.

The British government had two embarrassments in any plan for extending aid to the South. The first was slavery, which was opposed to the British tradition of the past generation. The other obstacle grew out of the French occupation of Mexico. Napoleon III conquered Mexico and seemed about to establish a protectorate over it. If the British government helped the South to gain its independence, it would probably be giving a deathblow to the Monroe Doctrine, which England had devised for its own benefit—which was, indeed, as much a British policy as an American. In case the South failed to dislodge the French, France would become the dominant power in tropical America.

The result was that England put pressure on Napoleon to keep him from declaring for the South. His policy became hopelessly irresolute and confused, because he could not afford to break with England. Though he was pursuing a course that depended for success on the success of the South, he looked on helplessly while his plans were brought to nought. But for this Mexican interlude, England might have recognized the Confederacy. It might have recognized the Confederacy anyway. Much depended on the inducements offered by Jefferson Davis.

He failed to offer enough. In fact, he did not really offer anything. His political incapacity once more undid him. Partly that, and partly his proud independence of spirit and thoroughgoing patriotism. Davis might have won English support but for his whole-hearted Americanism. He did not want independence of the North at the price of dependence on England. Yet this was the price that had to be paid—a temporary dependence, at least, on England.

Davis, in his ignorance of European affairs, did not realize the situation as fully as other Southern politicians did. Rhett, who was chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations in the provisional Congress, and Toombs, the Secretary of State, drew up a plan offering England large commercial concessions in return for recognition. In fact, Rhett and Toombs would probably have accepted vassalage, trusting to win complete commercial independence at a later date. If the planters had kept control of the government, the plan would have gone through. England was to be offered possession of Southern commerce for twenty years.

Davis would not agree to this, and on the very threshold of his career thwarted Rhett and Toombs and turned them

against him. He probably did not think the sacrifice necessary—besides, there was his pride. He seems to have thought that England could be won by vague assurances. When the commission headed by Yancey went abroad in 1861, it had no authority to make treaties: it had no power to do anything but advertise the trade advantages of the South and thus gain the good offices of Europe. Naturally, Europe was not to be dragged into danger of war without definite compensations. As might have been foreseen, Yancey's mission proved a fiasco and the promoter of disunion returned in despair. Late in the same year the famous Mason and Slidell mission went abroad, but the commissioners were taken from an English ship by a Union man-of-war, and until their release, some time later, the Confederate government was represented in Europe only by a few purchasing agents.

Jefferson Davis had no foreign policy, though he had a very lively hope of foreign intervention. Toombs offered advice in vain. The President was drifting, hoping that England's economic necessities would force a break of the blockade and leave the Confederacy untrammeled by a disadvantageous treaty. From the beginning of the war until 1864, Davis really counted on European intervention as the South's best hope of success. For this reason, mainly, he adopted an attitude of masterly inactivity in the first months of the Confederacy, letting time pass unimproved and failing properly to equip the army before the closing of the ports. If Jefferson Davis had not counted on foreign aid, he would have made much more vigorous preparations for war than he did.

Before the government was a month old Davis had let the politicians know that he was master. Rhett and

Toombs, who had counted on conducting foreign affairs, soon found themselves helpless and unregarded. The foremost men of the South were without influence. The only three persons who had much power were Mallory; Memminger, who was allowed to conduct the treasury as seemed best to him since Davis did not deal with finance; and Benjamin, who was fast becoming the President's confidential adviser.

Benjamin, who was destined to play a leading rôle in the tragedy of the Confederacy, was a deft, supple man who knew how to combine deference with charm. Without much intellectual depth, he had a large knowledge of life and men. He was an unsurpassed jury lawyer, a pleasingly eloquent senator, a clever politician. After studying Jefferson Davis for some months, he learned how to approach him. The President, like most rulers, enjoyed being treated as a great man: indeed, his worst weakness was susceptibility to flattery. He wished to be agreed with, to impress, to persuade; he disliked opposition. Benjamin agreed with him. He further had the address to advance suggestions in such a way that they seemed to emanate from the President himself. The result was that Davis came to lean more and more on the adroit Benjamin and less and less on any other member of the cabinet.

Outside the cabinet the President had few intimates. From the first he did not get on well with the planter politicians. The imperious Rhett, Yancey, Toombs, Wigfall, and all their tribe spoke to him freely and as man to man; they were sometimes undiplomatic. Consequently, Benjamin, who never deviated from smooth courtesy and smiling acquiescence, obtained an influence somewhat out of proportion to his merits. He was a shrewd man of af-

fairs rather than a statesman, and not a very able administrator. Davis tried him as Secretary of War and found him unsatisfactory. He then made Benjamin Secretary of State and put foreign affairs in his hands to a far greater degree than in the case of Toombs and Hunter, the two premiers that preceded the Louisianian. In this capacity Benjamin admirably justified Davis's judgment. He did everything possible under conditions which made nothing of consequence possible. If he had been sent to Europe with plenty of money and unlimited power to make treaties, he might have secured the success of the Confederacy. He never had the chance. Because of his intimacy with the President, Benjamin has been prominent in Confederate history. Small, rotund, dapper; a great lover of the good things of life; a man of many accomplishments; an exotic in glaring contrast with the Anglo-Saxons around him, he stands as one of the most individual and striking figures of the period.

Early April found war not yet come but hurrying on the way. The Southern government sought to avert it by coming to terms with Washington. Possibly it even yet dreamed of a compromise. Commissioners were sent to persuade the Union government to give up the forts in Southern harbors still held by United States troops: it was here that the theory of state sovereignty struck a snag. Seward, who was bent on gaining time, entered into negotiations with the commissioners, allowing them to think that his government seriously considered their demands. At length the mask was thrown off; the Union government called on the states to supply a volunteer army, and the popular delusion that there would be no war because secession was legal suddenly came to an end.

Indeed, the dreams of many peacemakers were sud-

denly shattered. The country was filled with men who thought that compromises might go on being made until the end of the world. The Virginia statesmen, especially, were of this type. While the Confederacy was forming at Montgomery and Seward was busily preparing for war, Virginia was conducting a Peace Congress under the chairmanship of ex-President John Tyler. Crittenden was prominent in this as in all other efforts to keep the peace, but the day of compromises was plainly over. The only effect of the Peace Congress was to embarrass the Confederacy and retard the secession of Virginia. At length the latter state called a convention to consider secession. So strong was the Union sentiment that the delegates dillydallied from day to day, while the chance of securing Kentucky and Maryland for the South quickly faded. R. M. T. Hunter, Henry A. Wise and the other secessionists were powerless to move Virginia until mid-April. This delay enabled Seward to win a victory that might almost be said to have saved the Union. By holding the attitude of conciliation while conservatives still hoped for peace, he enabled the Lincoln administration to secure Washington and complete its organization undisturbed. When war came, the government was not altogether unprepared.

The war began in April. The Confederates continued to press Washington to surrender Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor. Seward had never returned a definite refusal, but the President made secret preparations to reënforce the fort. A fleet sailed for Charleston, and the Southern government was now faced by the necessity of deciding to permit a hostile force to entrench under its very nose or to take the grave step of opening the conflict.

The position was distressing, but at this particular moment the South had everything to gain by delay. A month earlier an attack on Sumter would have greatly embarrassed the Union government, but the latter was now well organized and not unready for war. There were no arms factories or munitions works in the South. A breathing space of a few weeks longer would enable the Confederacy to hurry in weapons and supplies from Europe. In a cabinet meeting where the question of reducing Sumter was discussed, Toombs strongly opposed taking the offensive. He declared that the firing on the fort would incur for the South the reproach of opening the war and would cost it all its numerous friends in the North. But Davis was in a position where further delay on his part would have been attributed to fear or indifference to the cause—was he not held by many to be a half-hearted secessionist?—and he decided on action. The Confederate commander at Charleston was ordered to take the fort.

This was easily done in a bloodless bombardment by the city batteries that commanded the harbor. In a moment the war spirit of the North, hitherto anything but ardent, flared up at the spectacle of the Stars and Stripes under fire. A great wave of enthusiasm also swept the South. Thousands of men offered themselves, even begged to be taken as soldiers. The Confederacy might have had a great army overnight. But there were few arms and munitions and almost no equipment. The South went to war with a deplorable lack of military means. The troops lugged shotguns and antique muskets and dragged along cannon of the vintage of 1812. They were, of course, highly untrained, though the human material was incomparable—

the flower of the planter civilization, bred to hunting and horseback riding.

After the firing on Sumter, Virginia seceded. The Old Dominion had dropped out of the rank of foremost states, but it was still a power and its action intensified the crisis. It seemed for a moment that the whole South, border states and all, would leave the Union. North Carolina, Arkansas and Tennessee seceded, completing the roll of the Confederacy. Kentucky and Maryland, however, had been lost—possibly because of the slow action of the other border states.

R. M. T. Hunter headed a delegation from Virginia to the Confederate government. He at once brought pressure to bear for the removal of the capital from Montgomery to Richmond. Montgomery had not proved a comfortable home for the politicians, who were eager for a change. The town was small, the hotels were wretched, the inhabitants were not particularly cordial. Besides, the leaders, with the same fallacious logic that had led them to elect Stephens Vice President, felt that it was desirable to court Virginia because that state had left the Union with great reluctance. Lastly, there was the prestige of Virginia, by which they hoped to profit. It should be noted, to his credit, that Jefferson Davis does not seem greatly to have favored the transfer. His hesitation was justified. The strength of the Confederacy was in the lower South, and the seat of the government should have been there. Montgomery was admirably situated for a Southern capital, for it looked both East and West. There the government might have worked, secure and undisturbed, with army headquarters in Virginia. But Congress insisted on going, and Davis agreed. This was the starting point of many evils. The Confederacy

bound its fortunes to a town on the frontier, out of touch with the lower South and far distant from what was to prove the main theater of the war, the Mississippi Valley.

Richmond, in 1861, was a small city of 40,000 people, a place of lawyers and tobacco merchants, already old-fashioned though not old. Seen from a little distance the town was quite charming, stretching along a range of hills overlooking the James, with the capitol gleaming in the center. This sedate place was transformed by being chosen as the seat of government. It soon became crowded with a floating population of 100,000—soldiers on leave, government clerks, refugees, camp followers, speculators, and all the nameless human rubbish that accumulates in a capital in war time. Dissipated, feverish, dirty because of the stress of war, at times in actual danger of starvation, it underwent the alternate phases of hope and despair for four years of bitter struggle.

Already, even before the removal from Montgomery, Davis was beginning to lose the confidence of the secession leaders. Some of them saw as clearly as we do today that there was an imperative need of immediate action —of taking the offensive rather than of standing on the defensive. Nothing followed the reduction of Fort Sumter: that was a threat succeeded by a pause. It would have been better if the pause had preceded the overt act of war. Rhett, soured by his failure to gain the presidency and irritated by Davis's action in foreign affairs, turned the Charleston *Mercury* against the administration. Lawrence Keitt was labeling Davis as a failure and his cabinet as a farce.[1] And Toombs did not hesitate to denounce, in public places, the inaction of the government. A fat, unwieldy

[1] Mrs. James Chestnut, *A Diary from Dixie*, 68.

man, with the throat whiskers of that æsthetically barbarous age, his appearance probably had something to do with his rejection for the presidency, as well as his good-fellow habits, just as Davis's noble presence was a great asset. Humanity, still, after an experience of thousands of years, is ridiculously influenced by externals. Notwithstanding his barrel body and his ham-shaped face, Toombs was a publicist of ability and a leader of magnetism. Of all the secession chiefs he was the most aggressive. He had opposed the firing on Sumter, but since the President had seen fit to open the war he favored pressing it with vigor. The enemy, he said, were in the field. Why wait for them to take the initiative? If the Confederates dallied, the Unionists would be the invaders. Virginia called for aid: it should be sent at once.[1]

This was an insubordinate attitude for a Secretary of State to assume toward his master, but the ardent secessionists were rendered desperate by Davis's caution. It was called a defensive policy, but the truth is that the President, in the difficulty of his position, did not know what to do. He was letting matters shape themselves, declining to attack Washington or to take any other aggressive course. Indeed, any other action would have been difficult, for the Confederate troops were still unequipped for war.

Jefferson Davis arrived in Richmond in May, 1861, after a journey in which he received a great many gratifying proofs of popular favor. Though the people of North Carolina and Virginia knew him but slightly, they were seized with one of those sudden enthusiasms for persons that are a familiar feature of war emotion. Davis was regarded as the great man of the South, now just come into his own,

[1] Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, 1, 39.

and was cheered by crowds at every station. His fine presence, his senatorial manner, his handsome, austere face, his vigorous speech had a favorable effect on the curious spectators. For a moment he was popular.

In Richmond he was received with open arms. Here he passed from the serene and confident atmosphere of the lower South into the anxious dubiety of the border states. On the border the people were by no means sure that the war would be a few weeks' affair. For that matter, neither was Davis. To do him justice, he had never entertained the illusions of the fire-eaters as to the non-military character of the North. If anything, he rather overrated the power of the North and underestimated the strength of the South, in spite of the confident statements he sometimes made in public. His real hope lay in foreign intervention. In his wife's drawing-room, in the cultivated circle that had established itself as Confederate society, he laughed at the boasters who claimed that the North would not fight. In moments of depression he predicted that there would be a long war, full of bitter experiences.[1] He seemed to be anything but sanguine of the outlook in June, 1861.

Richmond treated him well because he was President of the South. Many of the leading men became his friends, particularly R. M. T. Hunter and James Lyons. Davis was well qualified to hold his own in any society, for he had courtly manners and was probably one of the most widely read men in the country. His range of information was encyclopedic. In Richmond, he found himself among congenial and cultured companions. The Virginia gentlemen of that day were perhaps behind the times, but they were usually well educated in the old-fashioned classical way.

[1] *A Diary from Dixie*, 71.

They were not as individual and as virile as the lower Southerners, but they were very fine men for all that. They were Nordics of the less stirring sort, whereas the people of the lower South, particularly of Texas, were Nordic adventurers.

Yet Jefferson Davis, cordially as he was treated, was never received into the heart of Virginia. He was always looked on somewhat in the light of a *parvenu*. He had no generations of slave-holding ancestry behind him, the test of social worth in Virginia. While his brief popularity lasted he was caressed, but later in the war the Virginia people grew colder. This was particularly the case with the women. Mrs. Davis was received with enthusiasm in 1861, but was spitefully talked about in 1864. The resident ladies discovered that as a girl she had done housework, and work was rather a social crime in a slave-holding community.

Contact with Virginia changed Jefferson Davis considerably. It somewhat ripened his judgment, for here he rubbed against conservatives who were much nearer England than the lower Southerners. Indeed, the Virginians were only rural Englishmen a little modified, while the lower Southerners were a new and distinct type. Davis actually came to think too much of Virginia and too little of the lower South. The defense of Virginia was vigorously prosecuted while such vital far-away points as New Orleans were neglected. Davis more and more tended to see matters through the eyes of the border states and he largely lost his contact with the Gulf region.

There was little time for social profit and pleasure in the first months of the Confederacy. Organization was the pressing need, and that was difficult to obtain in the lack of organizers. Politicians rather than administrators filled

the cabinet and the departmental headships. Finance and diplomacy were not in the President's line and he did not give much thought to them. War was his specialty, and it was generally believed that he would shine in military administration. At the very outset, however, he was embarrassed by the jealousies of his generals. There was, indeed, almost a superfluity of riches in the way of generals, for many of the leading officers of the United States army had gone out of the Union with their states. Five men were commissioned full generals in the following order: A. S. Cooper, Albert Sidney Johnston, Robert E. Lee, Joseph E. Johnston and G. P. T. Beauregard.

Cooper was a routine nonentity. The others were men of character and ambition. Albert Sidney Johnston was regarded by many as the best officer in the American service: he had fought in Texas and Mexico and had led an army a few years before to reduce the Mormons to allegiance to the United States. Joseph E. Johnston, who had also served in Mexico, ranked Lee in the United States army and, according to Confederate law, should have had a higher grade; but Davis managed to get around the difficulty on a technicality, putting Lee ahead of Johnston. It was a foolish cleverness on the President's part and had the effect of making a breach between himself and one of the foremost Southern officers. Lee was a soldier of long service and brilliant record and had been picked by Winfield Scott as his successor in command of the United States army. This fine prospect he had blasted by becoming a Confederate. Beauregard, though only a captain at the time of his elevation, was looked on as a soldier of exceptional ability.

Joseph E. Johnston and Beauregard were assigned to the command of the two principal bodies of Confederate troops,

which were stationed in northern Virginia. Richmond was general headquarters and the seat of the main training camps. It was Davis's habit, in these days of June, 1861, to ride out to the camps in the afternoon and review the troops in the presence of swarms of women. "Mr. Davis," said a spectator, "rode a beautiful gray horse. . . . His worst enemy will allow that he is a consummate rider, graceful and easy in the saddle." [1] He was usually accompanied by his handsome young private secretary, Burton Harrison, whose impeccability of dress and bearing was never ruffled by the worst storms of the Confederacy.

The government had obtained quarters in Richmond not without difficulty. It was unceremoniously crowded into various places: the treasury occupied the former post office, and here Davis had his office. The departments were organized on what might be considered an absurdly meager scale, and administration, especially in the War Department, seems to have been unbusinesslike. Foresight was lacking. With a great war impending and thousands of men volunteering, the army remained small. Cavalry was usually rejected, though cavalry was precisely the branch in which the South was far superior to the North. Infantry commands were not accepted for short terms of service, and the attitude of the government was hardly calculated to foster the enthusiasm of the people.[2] In fact, the government made a great mistake in not capitalizing the war ardor of the South and raising a large army at the very beginning of the conflict, when it could have thrown forward on Washington at least 100,000 men. It is true that there were not arms enough for half that many, but weapons and

[1] *A Diary from Dixie*, 72.
[2] *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, 1, 59.

supplies were beginning to come in from Europe in considerable quantities, especially from Austria. Not enough, however, was done by the government. The golden months of March and April, 1861, when the ports were still open and undisturbed, was the period for large arms importations. If the Southern forces took the field in 1861 poorly equipped, it was partly the fault of the government, which did not act with sufficient energy in the early months of the struggle.

By July, about 30,000 troops, fairly well equipped, faced a Union force near Washington and another in the Virginia Valley near Winchester. The Union army, like the Confederate, was untrained, but it had modern artillery and was, therefore, stronger. Beauregard was in eastern Virginia, Johnston in the Valley.

Beauregard conceived the idea of drawing Johnston to him and attacking McDowell, who was just outside Washington, and of then turning with the combined force on Patterson at Winchester. Coming to Richmond, he met Cooper and Lee in Davis's parlor at the Spotswood Hotel, where the President then had rooms. Here, on July 13, 1861, the first Confederate council of war was held. Beauregard presented his plan, but Lee objected that McDowell was too close to the Washington forts to be caught and would fall back into them if attacked. The plan would be thus frustrated, while the Valley would be laid open to a counterstroke by Patterson. So the proposal was rejected.[1]

It was characteristic of the opinion held of Davis at that time that one of the women of his little court wrote of this council of war, "Of course the President dominated the party, as well by his weight of brains as by his position." [2]

[1] *Official Records, War of the Rebellion, Series* 1, 2, 511.
[2] Mrs. Chestnut, 83.

Such a statement is, in a sense, illuminating; it is diagnostic. It exhibits the feminine admiration of Davis at the opening of the war and Davis's own complacency. It would not have been written about a man without vanity.

McDowell, the Union commander, slowly advanced southward until he approached Beauregard, who had taken position behind Bull Run near Manassas. It was evident that a battle impended. Davis kept closely informed of movements in the field. He intended, in fact, to leave Richmond on the eve of the expected engagement and assume command of the Southern forces, combining the rôles of civil ruler and general, after the manner of Napoleon. But Beauregard, who knew this and did not desire presidential interference, failed to advise him of the urgency of the situation. In consequence, Davis did not leave Richmond for the field until the morning of July 21, at the very moment that the battle of Manassas was beginning.

McDowell had suddenly moved on Beauregard, who called on Johnston for aid. Johnston, by a hurried march, joined him just before the battle. In a confused struggle along Bull Run victory wavered for several hours. The day was finally won for the South mainly because of Stonewall Jackson, who handled his brigade with remarkable coolness in an hour of hysterical excitement. It was a singular situation, such as sometimes occurs in war. The Southern troops were falling back under heavy pressure. Then, almost in a moment, they found that they had won the victory. The Union line hesitated, halted and broke in utter rout. It was a typical panic of raw troops.

Jefferson Davis rode on the field just as the engagement was ending. Fugitives from Confederate commands still streamed to the rear, unaware that the battle was over.

The President could not know that it was. Joseph Davis, who was with him, said, "The day is lost; let us go no farther." "No," replied the President, "if the army is defeated, so much the greater reason that I should be with my brave men and share their fate." [1]

Seeing a group of men about an officer, Davis rode up and implored them to return to their duty. Perhaps he was a little melodramatic under the stress of his emotion. The officer, who happened to be Stonewall Jackson receiving treatment for a slight wound, was disagreeably impressed by the interference of a civilian he did not know. His temper was always rather short, and he informed the newcomer, in freezing tones, that the men were his soldiers and that the victory was won. Thus the President's effort to take part in the action resulted in nothing but a humiliating rebuff.

Davis now hunted up Johnston and Beauregard and urged an immediate pursuit of the flying foe, an advance on Washington. This was clearly the thing to do. The Union army was demoralized—indeed, for the time being it had ceased to exist as an organized force. Many of the Southern regiments were fresh and all were flushed with victory. A prompt advance would likely have resulted in the capture of Washington and the secession of Maryland. It was the most fateful moment in the whole history of the Confederacy: any result might have flowed from one hour of audacity. Fate had given the South the luckiest of victories, an undeserved but, none the less, a golden opportunity. Manassas in itself was a small affair, hardly worth a paragraph in a book, and its results were wholly unfortunate for the South; but it might well have ranked as

[1] E. A. Pollard, *Life of Jefferson Davis*, 142.

one of the decisive battles of history if it had been won by men capable of utilizing an advantage, for the border states still hung in the balance and all of them might have come over to the South if the Confederate army had invaded the North. Nothing succeeds like success. Manassas was the fruit of Northern over-confidence. The Union government should never have sent a small and untrained army into the interior of Virginia: this mistake gave the Confederacy a chance to win the war at a stroke.

So far the gods had been with the South. It had begun its movement for independence under favoring stars. It confronted a distracted North with a largely united people. Its economic resources remained intact while the North faced panic and ruin. Its credit was good. True, the Southern government had been undecided and dilatory, adopting no policy and inviting disaster by its tardy military preparations. Nevertheless, fate had intervened to save it by giving it the first victory of the war.

The gods, however, do not do everything; they grow weary of lavishing opportunities. Johnston, the immediate commander of the Southern army, was a professional soldier of great accomplishments but little enterprise. In purely defensive, engineer warfare he had no superior, but he lacked the energy to push his victory home and seize Washington. He made various excuses: the army was disorganized; there was lack of transportation (for a march of twenty miles!) and so on. Thus the opportunity was allowed to pass, to the astonishment of the world and the gratitude of the Northern government.

Davis cannot be blamed for this ineptitude: it was not his proper policy to interfere with his generals beyond giving advice, and they had not taken his advice to pursue. Re-

turning to Richmond, he spoke at his hotel to a great throng. He described the overthrow of the Union host and declared that the just cause must prevail. He received an ovation, as was natural, though in a few days men began to ask why the triumph had not been followed up. Yet the public generally had suddenly become confident of the outcome of the war. As for Jefferson Davis, his own strong doubt of success was greatly lessened by the First Manassas.

The Union government took advantage of its fortunate respite to prepare for war in earnest, while the efforts of the South slackened from the belief that they were no longer necessary. Thus the South stood still at the very moment that the North set to work. Davis knew well enough that the war was not over, but he could formulate no real policy—he did not know what to do. Toombs was out of the cabinet now. Weary of his position as minister of foreign affairs to a government that had no foreign affairs and of official adviser to a chief who never followed his advice, the Georgia statesman went into the army. No man so virile and outspoken as Toombs could have co-operated effectually with the sensitive, egotistical Davis, who demanded of his subordinates a recognition of his superiority. He was by no means the stubborn, wrong-headed man he has frequently been pictured as being: he welcomed suggestions if tactfully advanced and weighed questions carefully; but he could not endure open opposition—especially opposition that implied any insufficiency on his part—and in the exigencies of war men do not always measure words. His was the sin of bookish people, intellectual vanity. Because he had a grasp of so many subjects, because he debated so well, he quite failed to realize that the faculty of action is the supreme thing, that expression

is less than nothing and thought valuable only in so far as it leads to doing. Davis was, in reality, not a man of action naturally, or he would have acted now. He was a student and thinker, a Cicero in another world crisis; though, with a power of character foreign to Cicero, he had to some extent transformed himself into a man of action, and while he was often at a loss as to the thing to do he never vacillated after he had once decided on a course.

Benjamin was fast gaining an ascendency over him. The dexterous Attorney-General had fixed his eyes on the War Department, already falling from Walker's feeble grasp.[1] At times, in August, 1861, there was actually no Secretary of War in charge, for Walker would go away, leaving the department to run itself. Finally he resigned, and Benjamin was made acting Secretary. The change was something of an improvement. The Louisianian, though he was quite without military knowledge, brought the habits of a business man to the task. If he had had any insight into war and if he had been given any rein, he might have accomplished much. As it was, he managed to do little of importance.

That Jefferson Davis tended to shrink from decisive action was indicated in the autumn of 1861, when he was forced to make a decision of a most vital nature. Beauregard and Johnston, unenterprising as they were, were too able not to awaken to the fact that a great opportunity was slipping from their grasp. The South had now about 150,000 men in the field, scattered from Florida to Arkansas, with some 40,000 in Virginia. This army was equipped with the material captured at Manassas; it had been drilled into an efficient organization, and it was prepared to take

[1] *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, I, 71.

the offensive with good chances of success. As yet, the Union government had no force to equal it, but McClellan was strenuously working at the making of an army and it was only a question of time before the Confederates would be heavily outnumbered and at a great disadvantage. So Johnston and Beauregard nerved themselves to attack before McClellan was ready.

At their invitation, Davis visited the camp near Manassas at the last of September. Johnston, Beauregard and Gustavus W. Smith were present: Johnston small, dapper, baldheaded; Beauregard typically French-looking; Smith heavy and ox-faced. For some time Davis led the conversation, apparently not desirous of coming to the business of the hour. He was at length interrupted by Smith, who asked abruptly if it were possible to reënforce the army sufficiently to invade the North. The President inquired how many men would be needed. Smith replied that 10,000 additional troops would be sufficient, that an army of 50,000 might venture on invasion. Davis then asked from what point it was proposed to take the troops. Smith suggested Pensacola, where there was a large force doing nothing. The President, after a little thought, declared the plan impracticable, and the conference ended without result.[1]

Davis thus avoided a decision that involved great danger. He preferred to remain defensive, to be safe, ignoring the fact that the Southern troops were ardent and the North unready, rather than take the risks of the offensive. A defeat might have spelt ruin, though a victory on Northern soil would probably have meant independence. Davis concluded to wait on the turn of events. Europe might intervene and end the war, or the North might abandon as hope-

[1] G. W. Smith, *Confederate War Papers*, 35.

less the attempt to conquer the South. Inaction, he thought, was the best course.

There was a good deal of reason for his decision. As yet no general had appeared who gave much promise of being able to conduct a successful offensive. Stonewall Jackson was still a mere brigade commander; Lee was fighting an unsuccessful campaign in the mountains of Virginia; Albert Sidney Johnston had not yet appeared on the scene; Joseph E. Johnston and Beauregard had not improved their success at Manassas, and Davis already distrusted them. Gustavus Smith had done nothing but talk. Where was the man to lead the army into Pennsylvania?

In spite of this, Davis would have done well to send the army across the Potomac. No better generals had arisen on the Northern side; Johnston and Beauregard were as capable as McClellan and McDowell. Moreover, the South possessed a positive advantage in the better quality of its troops: in the autumn of 1861 the Confederates were superior soldiers, man for man, to their opponents. This superiority, due to familiarity with the use of firearms, dwindled steadily as the war continued. By the end of 1863 the fighting qualities of the two armies were about equal and by the summer of 1864 the Unionists were, generally, the better troops. In October, 1861, however, with approximately equal generalship and equal numbers, the chances of battle would have favored the South. Consequently, in not undertaking the offensive, Jefferson Davis lost another chance to win the war, though something is to be said for his reluctance to attempt an aggressive campaign without an aggressive general. When one did appear in Lee, Davis risked the invasion of Pennsylvania, but under very different conditions from those of 1861. An effort

in 1861 might have resulted no more favorably than that of 1863. Yet since the offensive was clearly the play for the Confederates in 1861, Davis would have done well to take the offensive and leave consequences to the gods. The gods might have smiled on audacity. At all events, never again did the South have such an opportunity to win the war.

VII

THE FIRST CRISIS

THERE was practically no more fighting in the East for the rest of the year. Davis had finally decided not to take the offensive, partly because of the military risks, partly because he hoped for European intervention and wished to show the world that the Confederacy had no aggressive designs. Here the politician interfered with the soldier, and disastrously. To adopt a waiting attitude was to play into the hands of the North. The South possessed the advantage of having a population readily adaptable to military pursuits, for the people were hunters and therefore used to arms and outdoor life. In October, 1861, it could have invaded Pennsylvania with 50,000 or 60,000 good troops, passably equipped, a force which the half-organized Union army could hardly have defeated. But the government drifted, and by the beginning of the next campaign the military balance had entirely shifted. Thus the South lost the benefit of its one great military asset.

In the last months of 1861, the Confederate government practically stood still. In the West, a stout old militia general, Sterling Price, was fighting to bring Missouri into the Confederacy, but Davis, with thousands of troops unemployed, gave him little aid. Price, indeed, fought one of the most marvelous of campaigns. With a force lacking

ordinary military organization and governed by the personal ascendency of the leaders alone, he won battles and almost wrested Missouri from the Union. But Davis had no encouragement to offer a general who had not graduated from West Point and knew nothing of the scientific aspects of war. Thus a state which might have been won for the South by vigorous action was allowed to go.

Davis either did not realize the peril of his position or he could not bring himself to act. His great hope was European intervention. After Manassas, he trusted that intervention would come quickly and did not push military preparations. But recognition was yet to be gained, and the President now made another effort to gain it. Late in 1861 a second commission was sent abroad: it had been selected with more thought to fitness and less to politics than the former one. John Slidell was chosen to go to France and James M. Mason to England. The appointment of Slidell was wise, for he was among the cleverest of American diplomats, but Mason was hardly so good a selection. He had been a senator from Virginia and he was an experienced and influential politician, but he was unversed in international intrigue. A lively observer said of him: "My wildest imagination will not picture Mr. Mason as a diplomat. He will say 'chaw' for 'chew,' and he will call himself 'Jeems,' and he will wear a dress coat for breakfast. . . . They say the English will like Mr. Mason; he is so manly, so straightforward, so truthful and bold. 'A fine old English gentleman,' so said Russell to me, 'but for tobacco. I like Mr. Mason and Mr. Hunter better than anybody else. And yet they are wonderfully unlike.' 'Now you just listen to me,' said I. 'Is Mrs. Davis [the President's wife] in hearing—no? Well, this sending Mr. Mason to London is the maddest

thing yet. Worse in some points of view than Yancey, and that was a catastrophe.' " [1]

The appointment of Mason was a matter of consequence, for England was the power on which the hopes of the government hung. The post demanded a different type from the proud Virginia senator. The Confederacy was an unrecognized government seeking recognition, not an established power treating with equals. It needed skilled intrigants without feelings, men willing to ascend the back stairs of courts and push the interests of their cause in covert ways. Benjamin was, of all others, the individual best fitted for the mission, and Davis made a vital mistake in not sending him, with full authority to treat and all the money the government could beg or borrow. If he had been sent abroad with an offer to England of advantages of the first magnitude and with abundant means to carry out his mission, it is by no means improbable that he would have succeeded. But as in the first instance, the envoys had no definite powers and carried no definite offers. Besides, they had little money with which to play a game in which money was indeed the sinews of war. Under the circumstances they did all that might have been expected.

Quite involuntarily, the Confederate envoys nearly accomplished their mission. They ran the blockade without difficulty but after leaving Nassau for England were dragged from a British ship by a United States man-of-war. This was little more than what was repeatedly done by the British in the World War, but England flared up at once and for a while it seemed possible that the United Kingdom would recognize the Confederacy. Seward, however, skillfully soothed the injured British honor and the Confederate

[1] Mrs. Chestnut, 117.

government made no effort to improve the opportunity by a great and positive offer. The incident passed into history without having benefited the South.

The envoys, released after a long detention, went on to their posts. They failed in their negotiations but yet came so near succeeding as to indicate what might have been accomplished by diplomats with full discretion and ample means. Slidell actually brought over Napoleon III to the Southern side by the tender of a bribe. He offered a large amount of cotton to the emperor and exceeded his instructions by suggesting an alliance of France and the Confederacy for action in Mexico. Napoleon, in return, whispered to Slidell that it might be possible to have warships built for the South in French shipyards, a hint that the Confederate agent gladly accepted. The French connection was further cultivated when the Confederate government, in 1863, floated its single foreign bond issue through Baron Erlanger, a Paris financier. Napoleon offered to mediate between the belligerents, but the Washington government declined his services.

Under Napoleon's assurances, the Confederate agents contracted for the building of several cruisers and two powerful ironclads in France. The ships were nearly completed when the Northern minister to France, Dayton, gained positive proof of their destination. Confronted with the evidence, Napoleon promptly threw over the Confederacy and refused to allow the ships to sail. This was the terrible disappointment that Slidell was obliged to bear on the very threshold of success.

Mason did not do as much as Slidell, though he, too, accomplished something. Several cruisers were fitted out in English shipyards, among them the famous *Alabama,* which

played havoc with American shipping. Other and powerful ships were built, which, if they had got to sea, would have raised the blockade temporarily and permitted a great cotton exportation. In France and England alike, the Union faced a great danger, for the Confederacy had a sufficiency of excellent naval officers and only needed ships.

Confederate diplomacy was defeated by Seward. The Union minister to England, Charles Francis Adams, practically forced the British government to awaken to the violation of neutrality involved in the building of Southern warships in England. Adams was able to accomplish this only by means of a skillful anti-Southern propaganda in Europe, conducted by clever agents at Seward's direction and with large expense. In fact, the Union spent money to great advantage, while the Southern agents were left without the means of purchasing friendship.

At length the Confederate government did try to raise a small amount of money abroad. In 1863, a loan of $15,000,000 was raised by the sale of cotton bonds. The loan was taken nearly at par and was so greatly over-subscribed that it seems the Southern government might have obtained almost any sum it needed. But the loan was too small to accomplish much, and a good deal of the money obtained was used in buying back bonds in order to keep prices up. The amount actually obtained, therefore, was little.

Davis would not adopt a bold borrowing and spending policy: he would not leap in the dark. Ordinarily his is the right policy, the policy of the prudent man. However, when fate is thrusting one forward one must leap or fall: one must risk or fail for not risking. This was the case with Jefferson Davis. In many cases he did wisely; almost always he did cautiously; except in some military appoint-

ments late in the war, he made no open, glaring, damning mistakes. At the same time he scored no decisive triumphs, and in the end he lost. Most men in his position would not have done so well. Some would have failed much more swiftly and disastrously. A very great man in that place of terrible responsibility would have failed utterly or would have succeeded, because a very great man would have dared. If the South could have been saved by prudence, patience, fortitude, resolution, Jefferson Davis would have saved it. But it could not be saved by passive virtues. It could be saved only by mighty action, and Davis did not act mightily.

He did not buy cotton at the beginning of the war and rush it abroad. He did not obtain arms and munitions in the largest possible quantities, buying factories if necessary. He did not raise a great army at the outset. He hesitated to use his forces in 1861, remaining on a tame defensive. He did not try to win a diplomatic victory in Europe by any means possible and at any expense. Instead, he was slow, cautious, conservative. And because he was so the Confederacy lost its initial advantage and the Union gained time—that agency that was so adverse to the South and so friendly to the North in 1861.

Davis, in war and diplomacy alike, followed the course of immediate safety. By remaining on the defensive no military risks were run; by abstaining from outside borrowing Confederate credit remained good; by making no definite engagements with England the government kept its hands free. In the autumn of 1861, Jefferson Davis counted on the cotton famine to force Europe to intervene. What would happen if Europe did not intervene he does not appear to have considered. Autumn passed with-

out Europe's making the slightest effort in behalf of the South.

As winter came on, the Confederate government realized that the war would reopen with vigor in the spring. The Union, so far from giving up the contest, was training a real army under a talented organizer, George B. McClellan. Davis, therefore, took up military preparations again, and in the late winter the government showed energy, especially in its efforts to create a navy. Mallory, though much disliked, was open-minded enough to try new ideas, and Southern naval construction went far toward revolutionizing marine warfare. Without shipyards and skilled laborers, the Confederates built the *Merrimac* and other improvised craft. Later the Southern engineers invented the first effective marine torpedoes and launched, at Charleston, the first submarine.

The Confederacy, militarily, was handicapped by the old-fashioned and artificial system of departments. The country was divided into a number of military districts, commanded by generals independent of each other but dependent on Richmond. One department might be in straits for men while troops in the next department stood idle. Cooperation was impossible without reference to Richmond, and Richmond was far away from most of the country. The situation was a triumph of red tape, an invitation to disaster. Worse, the ships built for the defense of New Orleans were built partly by the army, partly by the navy, with the natural result that they were not ready when needed. The main danger to the defensive system was the Mississippi River, which gave the side possessing a fleet a great advantage. The government, away off at Richmond, did not realize the importance of fortifying the Mississippi.

At Montgomery, Jefferson Davis would have been in touch with the West and some of the mistakes he committed would not have occurred. The very situation of the Southern capital suggested that a commander was needed for the whole West with large powers.

It is a mistake to think that Davis did not permit his generals a wide discretion. His military training made him understand the danger of hampering army commanders with too definite instructions. Albert Sidney Johnston in the West and Joseph E. Johnston in the East largely conducted their campaigns according to their own judgment. But the former was handicapped by having only a department to draw from when he needed all the resources of the West. The Mississippi Valley was lost partly because of the Confederate departmental system. That system followed state lines instead of natural divisions. It should have centered around the Mississippi River: all of the Confederacy west of the Alleghanies should have been divided into two departments—that of the Upper Valley and that of the Lower Valley. Such a system would have allowed a concentration of troops at one end for the defense of New Orleans and at the other for that of Memphis and Vicksburg. Because the Mississippi was the dividing line of departments, departmental commanders on opposite sides of the river pursued contrary policies at critical times. The fall of Vicksburg was partly due to this.

The many departments enabled the President to keep any one general from becoming predominant, but he did so at the price of efficiency. Beyond doubt Davis was somewhat jealous of his prerogative as commander in chief and resented any infringement. But his confident and rather haughty air in public led people to believe that he was

much more pragmatic than he really was. Thus, the *Examiner* said of him, unfairly: "Serene upon the frigid heights of an infallible egoism sat Mr. Davis, wrapped in sublime self-complacency." [1] As a matter of fact, the President was frequently anything but self-complacent and he often followed the advice of his councilors, sometimes against his own judgment. Benjamin had great weight with him at first. Lee and Seddon did later. Seddon, when Secretary of War, actually persuaded Davis to give Joseph E. Johnston what was almost an independent command in the West. This shows that Jefferson Davis, jealous as he naturally was, sometimes delegated large powers to others. He was by no means the narrow-minded dictator, set in his opinion, that he has so frequently been represented as being.

Jefferson Davis also had much more military talent than critics have credited him with. It has been pointed out, notably by General E. P. Alexander, that the government overlooked a great opportunity in not making use of the comparatively short railway communication between Virginia and Tennessee. The chances of the Confederacy would have been materially increased by the employment of the interior lines of communication, East and West, and the concentration of forces at threatened points.

The critics fail to realize the poorness of railroad communication in the Confederacy: it could have been bettered only by the most strenuous efforts of the government. Besides, the generals did not appreciate the value of the interior lines, and the government can hardly be held responsible for their oversight. Lee not only did not see it but he opposed the use of interior communications when the government considered just this thing. In May, 1863,

[1] August 5, 1863.

Seddon actually made preparations to send troops to the aid of Vicksburg, but Lee's opposition killed the plan. In September, 1863, Longstreet urged the sending of troops to Tennessee; and this time the government sent them, despite Lee's objections. Chickamauga followed, vindicating the move. The truth is that Davis and Seddon did realize the value of the strategic railways, but that Lee and Joseph E. Johnston did not. In this important point, the two great generals failed to anticipate modern war.

Jefferson Davis was not a military genius by any means, but he usually had good military ideas. His chief military weakness was temperamental: he was naturally overcautious. And this happened to be a vital fault, for the Confederacy was a bold experiment. Its best chance of success lay in audacity at the beginning of the war before the overwhelming power of the North was concentrated against it. As it happened, the fate of the Confederacy at this time rested with men even more cautious than Davis—Johnston and Beauregard. The temerarious ones, Lee and Jackson, had not yet come to the fore. The government and the generals remained inactive while the initiative passed to the Union. When Lee, by a series of great victories, overcame the disadvantage flowing from this timidity and took the offensive himself, the opportunity had passed. It thus happened that the strategic mistake of the South was twofold: it stood on the defensive when aggression offered victory; and it assumed the offensive too late, when the defensive had become the only sound policy.

Davis had posted small bodies of troops at various strategic points. The perils of this defensive, dispersive system, which seemed to him to involve the least risks, suddenly became manifest early in 1862. The Washington govern-

ment had found in Halleck a man able to devise a military policy. The Union chief of staff hit on the plan of assailing the Confederacy wherever naval power could be brought to aid the army. Thus the coasts of the Carolinas were to be attacked, the mouth of the Mississippi was to be entered, and Tennessee was to be penetrated by way of the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers. As a corollary, Virginia was to be invaded from Chesapeake Bay. The control of the Mississippi River was the prime objective. This policy resulted in the victory of the Union after many tribulations. The inaction of the Confederate government in the autumn of 1861 had allowed the Union time in which to muster and train large armies, and the military situation was now wholly reversed. In October, 1861, Washington was to be had for the taking; in February, 1862, the Confederacy was in imminent peril.

By the beginning of 1862, therefore, the North had a military policy. The South had none and never developed one. Confederate strategy was always piecemeal and unrelated; almost no effort was made, except in the autumn of 1863, to coördinate various movements for a common end. Owing to the wide dispersion of the Southern forces, the Union commanders were able to select their objectives at pleasure, without fear of a counter-offensive. The Confederate government had done little in the way of recruiting in the winter; volunteering had ceased; its forces were now everywhere greatly outnumbered, and it was unprepared for the storm that burst on it. Yet it must be said that this was the fault of the people more than of the government: the Southern people, after the battle of Manassas and months of inaction, thought that the war was over.

The principal danger to the Confederate defensive line

was in Tennessee. Albert Sidney Johnston, the commander of the Tennessee department, reached his headquarters at Nashville late in 1861. He was dismayed to find that almost no defensive measures had been taken, owing to the fact that the public thought that the South had already won. Johnston was a soldier, not a politician, and he attempted to arouse the people to a sense of their danger with little success. He was regarded as the prophet of a wrath that was not to come. Still he managed to raise a small army, with which he confronted two Union forces that threatened Tennessee, the one under U. S. Grant near the Mississippi River, the other under Don Carlos Buell in the Kentucky mountains. Johnston's solution of a difficult strategic problem was commonplace. Dividing his command, he sent a part to hold the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers against Grant, while he faced Buell with the remainder. A wiser move would have been to throw himself on Grant with his whole force and leave Buell temporarily unopposed.

The division of the Southern army resulted in a great misfortune. The detached force, under incompetent political generals, held Forts Henry and Donelson, which Grant besieged. The amateurs lost their heads in the face of Grant's able tactics and surrendered their army at Fort Donelson. It was a great victory for the North, a blow from which the South never recovered. The Mississippi River as far as northern Mississippi was lost, together with the western half of the state of Tennessee.

This disaster, together with the loss of Roanoke Island on the North Carolina coast, awakened the South from its fool's paradise. The people realized, with a sudden shock, that the war was only beginning, that the North, so far from conceding Southern independence, was about to put

forth gigantic efforts to crush secession. The passive defensive was crumbling everywhere: Europe made no move toward intervention. It was evident that the Confederacy must make a great and united effort if it would save itself.

The crowd demanded a victim to atone for disasters that were, in reality, as much the fruit of the popular over-confidence as of the government's defective measures. When Congress met, late in February, for its first regular session, a cry arose against the incumbent in the war office, Benjamin. Davis's old opponent in Mississippi, Henry S. Foote, now a member of Congress from Tennessee, attacked Benjamin bitterly, and a committee was appointed to investigate his conduct.[1] The President found it necessary to make a change, while at the same time he was angered by the criticisms of the Secretary of War, which reflected likewise on himself. Perhaps he was not really sorry to remove Benjamin from a post for which he was unfitted, but he had no attention of humiliating a friend who had labored conscientiously, if ineffectively, in the war office and who had excellent talents in other lines. The place of Secretary of State happened to be vacant. It had been passed on from Toombs to Hunter, who found it little to his liking and resigned. Davis appointed Benjamin to the vacancy and succeeded in getting the Senate to confirm him. Benjamin was as well fitted as any man in the country for the State portfolio, but he was already intensely unpopular and he remained so until the end of the war. His unpopularity considerably injured Jefferson Davis.

This incident marks a period in Davis's career. For the first time, he was facing widespread criticism. All the blame for the disasters of 1862 could not be put on Benjamin

[1] Pierce Butler, *Judah P. Benjamin*, 255.

and the generals; there was a sudden alteration in the public attitude toward the President. In fact, he had been caught napping. Immersed in the thought of foreign intervention, he had failed to give proper attention to military measures. Suddenly, in February, 1862, it became evident that the national defense was inadequate. The country was plunged at one step from serenity into consternation. There had long been private condemnation of the government: for instance, in March, 1862, Edmund Rhett said, "Jeff Davis is conceited, wrong-headed, wranglesome, obstinate, a traitor." Now there came a great wave of public questioning that left Davis's popularity permanently undermined. He never again occupied the high place in the esteem of the country that he did in the summer and autumn of 1861.

Under such disheartening circumstances, Jefferson Davis was inaugurated as regular President, on February 22, 1862. He had been elected in November, 1861, for a term of six years. Washington's Birthday had been selected as an inaugural of happy memory, but the omens were unfavorable. The weather was wretched, with an unintermitting winter rain. When Mrs. Davis set forth for the celebration, she was astonished to see walking on each side of the carriage four solemn negroes, clad in black and wearing white gloves. On questioning her coachman she was informed, "Well, ma'am, you tole me to arrange everything as it should be; and this is the way we do in Richmon' at funerals and sich-like."

A crowd gathered before the Washington monument in the capitol square, where the dingy imitation of the installation of a United States President took place. It was a small performance compared with Washington. A bishop tendered the oath in the absence of a chief justice, and the

President, bareheaded in the rain, made a good speech which did not arouse much enthusiasm. He declared that the Southern fortunes, then overshadowed, would soon shine out as brightly as the morrow's sun. He proclaimed the victory that was sure to come.[1]

That evening he gave his first public reception, and all the world flowed through the chambers of the modest house on Clay street he now called home. Cabinet members and generals rubbed elbows with the obscure. Davis moved through the crowd with his "not over-cordial grasp," seeking for once to unbend his austere and gloomy manner. He could be pleasant; there was a certain magnetism about the man that captured many. Colonel Fremantle said of him, "Nothing can exceed the charm of his manner, which is simple, easy and most fascinating." But genial moods were all too unfrequent. Not that he was inaccessible—he could easily be approached—but that he was overloaded with the burden of responsibility, "as if the weight of the world were on his shoulders." His invalid temperament threw off its cares with difficulty, and a long day of routine labor, much of it unhappily trivial, left him exhausted at nightfall.

Yet in the first winter of the war he often allowed himself an hour's relaxation. Mrs. Davis was at home to a small group every evening, and the President would come into the drawing-room. He rarely said much, preferring to listen to his wife's bright chatter. When he did speak, it was to some point. He liked the society of young girls, particularly that of Constance Cary, the *enfant terrible* of the circle, who amused Richmond with her pranks. He would sometimes grow quite confidential with sympathizing women and unburden himself. Yet he seldom talked long. After

[1] T. C. De Leon, *Four Years In Rebel Capitals*, 164.

an hour of the chat, he went off to his office for an evening's labor on the military details he invested with such pathetic importance.

Socially, Jefferson Davis was very frank and wholly unpretending. "The President," said Mrs. Chestnut, "walked with me slowly up and down the long room, and our conversation was of the saddest. Nobody knows so well as he the difficulties which beset this hard-driven Confederacy. He has a voice which is perfectly modulated, a comfort in this loud and rough soldier world. I think there is a melancholy cadence in his voice at times of which he is unconscious." [1]

And on another occasion she had this to say: "We went to the White House. They gave us tea. The President said he had been on the way to our house, coming with all the Davis family to see me, but the children became so troublesome they turned back. Just then, little Joe rushed in and insisted on saying his prayers at his father's knee, then and there. He was in his night clothes."

In the year of his provisional presidency, Jefferson Davis had done much and also failed to do much. The South had looked on while the North bent painfully to the task of subduing the seceding states. The North had toiled terribly. It had adapted itself to a new economic situation, managed to finance the war, manufactured vast quantities of arms and ammunition, raised a great army and built a great navy. The situation of the year before was reversed: then it had seemed that the Union was about to crumble into pieces while a triumphant South pursued its own independent destiny. But the South had made the mistake of giving the North time to bring its mighty mechanical resources to

[1] Mrs. Chestnut, 274.

bear, and now the downfall of the Confederacy was imminent. Such had been the change wrought by a great government and an energetic people. As spring advanced, Confederate disaster continued. In April, New Orleans fell after a feeble resistance, and the one large city of the South passed into the enemy's hands, a blow which the Confederacy felt to the end. New Orleans was really a sacrifice to the bad position of the Southern capital, for the government, under the wretched transportation conditions, could not give the distant city the needed attention. In Virginia, Joseph E. Johnston's force confronted a well-trained and splendidly-equipped army under George B. McClellan. In Tennessee, Grant and Buell were converging for the conquest of that state.

After Fort Donelson, Albert Sidney Johnston had become bitterly unpopular, the inevitable consequence of failure. Strong pressure was brought to bear to force his removal, but Davis, wise in this instance, refused to bend to the clamor. "If Sidney Johnston is not a general," he said pathetically, "I have none to give you." Johnston was so stung by criticism that he wished to transfer the active command of the army to his subordinate, Beauregard, who had been sent to him from Virginia. Beauregard refused the command but urged Johnston to attack Grant before Buell joined him.

Grant was at Pittsburg Landing, or Shiloh, on the Tennessee River; Buell was not far away. The Confederates advanced, hoping to take the former by surprise and, in the early morning of April 6, 1862, assaulted the Union lines. They stormed the rough defenses of logs and drove the Unionists back to the river, capturing thousands of prisoners. The broken ground, however, delayed the assailants, and

Johnston was killed. The result was that a part of the Union army still held the bluff overlooking the Tennessee when twilight fell on the field. The Southerners had won the day but they had failed of complete success in a situation where not to win decisively was to lose. In the night Buell joined Grant, and the next morning the combined army advanced against the Confederates, now under Beauregard. The Unionists regained the field, and the Confederates retreated to Corinth, in northern Mississippi. Thus the battle of Shiloh turned out to be a Southern defeat after a great initial success.

The people were shocked by the loss of a battle which had, from the first reports, seemed to be a great victory. They attributed the result to the death of Johnston, who has ever since been hailed as the lost genius of the South. Not improbably, however, he was fortunate in his glorious death, for he had shown no marked strategic ability in his brief command and he had terrible problems to face. Beauregard fell back from Corinth to Tupelo. Meanwhile, Davis was making every effort to reënforce him, telegraphing the governors of all the lower South states to send troops. Until they responded, the Confederate cause in the West seemed on the point of collapse.

The Union prospects were brilliant both in the East and West as Davis's system of passive defense, based on wide distribution of troops instead of the use of interior lines, failed everywhere. Yet the Washington government was not disposed to overrate the chances or to lose the opportunity offered by the rise of the Union prospects to open indirect negotiations with Jefferson Davis looking to a reconciliation. Count Mercier, the French minister, came to Richmond with a charge from Seward to sound the Confed-

erate government. Mercier did not meet Davis, but he dealt with a politician close to the latter, James Lyons. He offered guarantees on the subject of slavery in return for the abandonment of the secession movement. Davis gave no definite reply, and Mercier returned to Washington without having accomplished anything. Shortly afterward the French consul in Richmond, Paul, told Lyons that Napoleon III was willing to recognize the Confederacy if slavery were gradually abolished. Again Lyons sought Davis, who said, "I should concur with you in accepting these terms but for the constitutional difficulty. You know that Congress has no jurisdiction over the subject of slavery." [1] Lyons then suggested that the individual states might be induced to abolish slavery, and Davis asked if France could not deal directly with them. Lyons replied that France would not go behind the Confederate government. The President ended the interview by stating that he would bring the matter before the cabinet. Nothing came of the suggestion at this time, but before the end the Southern government expressed to France its willingness to sacrifice slavery, *malgré* the constitution.

In the meantime McClellan was actively preparing to take Richmond. Instead of trying the overland route, he transferred his army to Fortress Monroe, with the intention of advancing up the peninsula between the York and James Rivers. Johnston moved from northern Virginia to the peninsula to meet him. The Southern army was so greatly outnumbered that the chance of holding Richmond seemed small. A council of war was held in the middle of April, 1862. The President, George Washington Randolph, the new Secretary of War, Robert E. Lee, Joseph E. Johnston,

[1] *Southern Historical Society Papers*, 7, 357.

Gustavus W. Smith and James Longstreet were present. The conference continued all day and until well into the night. Smith, the spokesman, presented two plans. One was to concentrate all available troops at Richmond for the defense of the city; the other was to garrison the capital for a siege and invade the North with the main army. Smith declared himself in favor of the latter plan. Johnston then urged the evacuation of the peninsula because it was commanded from the water. Lee opposed evacuation, insisting that the peninsula could be held. A heated discussion followed. Longstreet agreed with Johnston, Davis with Lee. At last it was decided to fight at Yorktown, scene of Washington's triumph of eighty years before.[1] In this council, Davis displayed his strategic preference, which was for fighting, even in a dangerous position, rather than retreating. He hated retreat beyond all other things.

The Confederacy was rescued for the time by the energy and decision of Jefferson Davis and the labors of one great man of action who now appeared on the scene, Robert E. Lee. When it became evident, in February, 1862, that it would not do to wait longer on European intervention and that the army must be increased without delay, Jefferson Davis acted with great vigor. Congress, at his dictation, passed a conscription act that brought thousands of men to the colors. It would seem that a draft was unavoidable, for volunteering had practically ceased and war cannot be made without soldiers, and yet no measure of the government awakened such bitter criticism and opposition as this act of self-preservation. Stephens denounced the draft for the whole length of the war. In his view the cause had better fall and the South be conquered rather than that the govern-

[1] *A Memoir*, 2, 263. Smith, 44.

ment should take a step which was an encroachment on states' rights. Thus, to Davis's other burdens, surely heavy enough, were added the complaints of sticklers for strict constitutionality on the part of a government which had not yet won its title to existence. At the same time, it is necessary to do justice to the constitutionalists. They stood for a great principle, one which has, in no small degree, made modern history. According to the strict construction view of the United States Constitution, which was also the Confederate constitution, conscription by the federal government was of doubtful legality. To Davis, violation of the constitution seemed better than ruin; to the strict constitutionalists, ruin seemed preferable.

That Jefferson Davis, in defiance of states' rights, had the courage to initiate the first general draft in American history, and the power to force it on the South, is proof that he possessed some great qualities. This was his supreme moment. He had miscalculated in the autumn of 1861, hoping for foreign intervention, and the country was unprepared for the Northern offensive when it came. Realizing the dire need, the President acted so swiftly and unhesitatingly that in a short time the Confederate forces doubled. Men poured into the training camps in myriads. They were drilled and equipped with commendable celerity.

Davis also acted most wisely in choosing Lee as his lieutenant, as he did at this juncture. Up to this time Lee had been somewhat of a disappointment. He had failed in an almost impossible campaign in the mountains of Virginia and had spent the winter in looking after the defenses of the South Carolina coast. In the early spring of 1862, he was considered an engineer officer rather than a field commander, and there was some hostile comment when the

President made him military adviser with a general supervision of the Eastern forces. For a time he was given a free rein. The result was immediately evident. Abandoning the dispersive defensive system, Lee quickly concentrated troops in Virginia until the army rose to 80,000 men, a force capable of opposing McClellan.

Johnston retreated up the peninsula. Strategically he was right, for the York and lower James could have been held only with much difficulty against an army aided by a fleet of gunboats; this was simply one of the disadvantages of Richmond as a capital. Falling back to the Chickahominy, Johnston informed Davis that he would fight McClellan there. The cabinet, which was in session at the time, heard this news with some distrust, for the army, if defeated, would have to cross a deep and dangerous stream with poor bridges. A suggestion was made that the President should call Johnston's attention to the peril of the position. This Davis positively declined to do, declaring that when he trusted a general with a command he left him free to act according to his judgment. Besides, he wanted a battle. Fearing for the capital, he impatiently waited for Johnston to make a stand.

Johnston, however, understood his danger. He retreated across the Chickahominy to the outskirts of Richmond, though without letting the government know of his change of plan. Davis, riding out with Postmaster-General Reagan, came suddenly on a camp of troops. On inquiry, the President was disagreeably surprised to learn that they belonged to Johnston's army. He was troubled; "his face took on a look of pain." [1] He had not been consulted in a movement of the utmost importance. The meeting between the Presi-

[1] John H. Reagan, *Memoirs*, 138.

dent and the general was stormy. Davis demanded why the latter had not contested the Chickahominy. Johnston answered, unconvincingly, that the troops were out of provisions and that the position was marshy and unhealthy. After a pause, Davis went on to ask whether Richmond was to be abandoned without a fight. Johnston made no positive reply. "If you will not give battle," said Davis, "I will appoint some one to command who will."

The President then sent for Lee, the military adviser, and poured out his dissatisfaction with Johnston. He thought that McClellan should be attacked at once, before he crossed the Chickahominy. Lee assented and talked with Johnston.[1] As a result, it was decided to take the offensive.

Johnston, compelled to fight, assaulted a part of McClellan's army which had crossed the Chickahominy in advance of the main body. The Southern troops were in superior force, but they were badly handled by an amateur staff in a forest region, and the battle became nothing but a series of fierce actions by separate commands. The Unionists were not crushed and Johnston's effort ended in failure. The battle of Seven Pines was, nevertheless, of great importance, for the Confederate commander was wounded and was succeeded by Robert E. Lee, who now began his wonderful career.

Davis, without a moment's hesitation, assigned the command of the army to Lee, although the latter's reputation was still at nadir and there were other generals who might have been tried. In this instance he showed rare judgment and quickness of decision in a very dangerous crisis. He reaped his reward in finding a general who was, in some respects, the foremost of modern commanders and whose

[1] *A Memoir*, 2, 276.

prowess almost turned the balance in favor of the South.

In the pause that followed Seven Pines, Stonewall Jackson completed his famous Valley campaign, begun some weeks before. Routing several small forces, he so terrified Washington that bodies of troops needed by McClellan were kept for the safety of the Union capital. Taking advantage of this dispersal, Lee drew Jackson quickly to him and prepared to attack McClellan. The Union commander had thrown up fortifications before Richmond and was about to lay siege to it. With his force, this was the wisest course, but it reckoned without the audacity of Lee.

In the last days of June, Lee threw his troops on a part of the Union army north of the Chickahominy, leaving but a slender detachment in front of Richmond. The Union right wing was crushed in the fierce engagement of Gaines's Mill, but it was not destroyed. McClellan, withdrawing it to the south bank of the stream, began a precipitate retreat to the James, where his gunboats lay. For a time he was in peril. Lee sought to block the way to the James and surround the Union host in the marshes of the Chickahominy. But his plans went awry, and McClellan escaped. He even turned at Malvern Hill and inflicted a bloody repulse on the pursuers. Yet a large army, which had threatened the Southern capital but a week before, had been beaten, and Lee's fame was world-wide.

Jefferson Davis was constantly on the scene in this struggle at the doors of Richmond. He sought to gratify his ambition to take a hand in directing the army in battle, but Lee snubbed him. At the opening engagement of the Seven Days, Davis rode on the field accompanied by a number of staff officers and civilians. Lee was found in the middle

of a road engrossed in directing an attack. Shot from the enemy's cannon flew by, occasionally killing a man or a horse. The general was visibly annoyed at the irruption of the cavalcade. He demanded of Davis in a tone of irritation, "Who are all this army of people, and what are they doing here?"

Davis, taken back, replied conciliatingly, "It is not my army, general."

"It is certainly not my army, Mr. President," Lee retorted; "and this is no place for it."

"Well, general," said the President, "if I withdraw, perhaps they will follow."

Turning his horse's head, he rode away, leaving Lee to conduct the engagement unassisted.

After this, Davis kept farther in the rear, though he followed the army in its movement toward the James, offering advice which Lee did not much heed. Even as late as 1863, Jefferson Davis still dreamed at times of taking command of the army and winning a decisive battle. "If I could take one wing and Lee the other," he said, "I think we could between us wrest a victory from those people."

VIII

A SEASON OF VICTORY

THE military situation in the East was utterly changed by Lee's great victory. In the West, however, there was no improvement. By this time Davis had lost all confidence in Beauregard. The general believed himself to be the victim of prejudice, but it seems likely that the President considered him a timid defensive commander who had failed to complete the victory at Shiloh and could not be relied on for vigorous tactics. He accordingly took advantage of Beauregard's absence from the army on account of sickness to replace him with Braxton Bragg, one of his subordinates. Bragg had commanded a division at Shiloh and Davis held him to be an excellent soldier, but he was an unfortunate selection. A dyspeptic and a martinet, he was never popular with his officers and men. His face looks at us from his pictures, tense, excited, wanting in self-control.

Beauregard's displacement was greatly resented in Louisiana. Some months later, a Louisiana delegation visited the President to urge his reinstatement in command. Davis disconcerted his visitors by taking their petition and reading it aloud with a running fire of comment. Then he declared that Beauregard had left his post without permission and that he would not restore him.[1] The delegation took its departure, much disgruntled.

[1] C. J. Villeré, *Review of Certain Remarks Made by the President.*

Beauregard had, in reality, given way to a soldier not so much unlike him as the President supposed. It is true that Bragg would fight, but his nerves proved unequal to the strain of command. Indeed, all the leading Confederate generals showed the effect of their terrible responsibility except Lee, whose perfect mental and physical poise was undisturbed by any crisis, and Jackson, who was always sick in peace and always well in war. Bragg had not held high rank in the United States army, and his appointment was in the nature of an experiment. As in the case of Jefferson Davis's other experiments, he was a failure. Davis was seldom successful in the choice of generals except of tried veterans such as Lee.

In the West the war stood still for a time. Not so in Virginia. Another Union army, under John Pope, advanced from Washington into northern Virginia. Lee, satisfied that McClellan, who was still on the James below Richmond, was no longer dangerous, turned on Pope. Audaciously leaving the capital almost unguarded, he suddenly transferred his forces to the upper Rappahannock. He sent Jackson ahead to turn Pope's flank and followed with the rest of the army. Pope attacked Jackson, who held him off until Lee and Longstreet arrived. The united Southern army then routed the Unionists and drove them back into the fortifications around Washington. The Second Manassas was a masterpiece of military art.

By two brilliant victories, Lee had changed the whole outlook of the war. The world began to think that the Union armies could not stand before the Southerners. Richmond was now safe, Washington in danger. Coincidentally, Confederate prospects brightened in the West. Bragg had assembled a formidable army and, more enterprising than

Beauregard if not more fortunate, advanced across Tennessee into Kentucky. An independent force under Kirby Smith moved on parallel lines. The capture of Louisville and Cincinnati seemed not unlikely. On the other side of the Mississippi, Earl Van Dorn was moving northward with a considerable force. Everywhere the Confederates were on the aggressive.

In the East, Lee sought to utilize his victory at Second Manassas by invading the North. In September, 1862, the Southern army crossed the Potomac while the world looked on in expectation of the fall of Washington. The advance should have been made a year before, when great results might have flowed from it. Davis had opposed invasion then: now he consented because he had confidence in Lee. He still hoped that Maryland might secede, or at least that Marylanders would flock into Lee's camp and swell his army. But the movement was made too soon, before Lee's troops had had time to recover from the exhaustion of the preceding campaign. It was, therefore, with an army too small for a serious invasion that Lee entered Maryland: he had force enough only for a raid.

It would have been better if the Southern commander had recognized this fact and had acted accordingly. Dividing his army, he sent Jackson to capture Harper's Ferry, while with the other half he faced McClellan, who had been brought back from the James in haste to defend the Union capital. Accidentally informed of Lee's plans by means of a lost dispatch, McClellan sought to intervene between Lee and Jackson.

Lee was in peril, but Harper's Ferry surrendered, with 13,000 Union troops, and Jackson hastened to join him before he was brought to bay. Lee now made his first im-

portant mistake. He might have retreated across the Potomac River with the fruits of a successful raid. If he remained, he would have to fight a battle near the river on a field where defeat meant ruin and where decisive victory was impossible. He had but 35,000 men against McClellan's 90,000, and the Union position was also stronger. Longstreet advised withdrawal, and even the fierce Jackson did not urge battle. But retreat in face of the enemy was difficult for a soldier of Lee's fighting proclivities, and he decided to hold his ground.

The engagement which followed at Sharpsburg, or Antietam, was a glorious testimony to American manhood, to the Nordic virtue of North and South alike. For the length of a summer day the Southerners, unsheltered by trenches, endured the frightful fire of the superior Northern artillery and beat off innumerable infantry attacks. They showed a steadiness more than Roman and perished by whole regiments. When night fell on the most terrible day in American history, they still clung to their position, though in places the dead alone held the Confederate line. As for the Union troops, mowed down by the withering fire of the Southern infantry and artillery at close range, they proved that their morale was not affected by the Second Manassas and that they could stand the most staggering losses without flinching.

McClellan did not attack next day, and the honors of a bare defensive victory were with Lee. But he could not assume the offensive in turn for lack of men, and there was no other course for him but to withdraw into Virginia, which he did in safety. Though a tactical victory, Sharpsburg was a strategic and political defeat for the South of great magnitude. In fact, perhaps more than any other single conflict of the war it was the decisive battle.

It weakened the fast-growing belief in Europe that Lee could win victories against any odds. After the overthrow of McClellan in the Seven Days and Pope at the Second Manassas, the world had begun to think that anything was possible for the great commander whose star had risen so suddenly, and there was a widespread conviction that the South would win. The North was in the depths of despondency at the utter failure of its mighty effort to subdue the seceding states. Lee, knowing this, had suggested to Davis that it would be well to open peace negotiations with Washington when he crossed the Potomac.[1] More important but unknown to both belligerents, the British government was seriously considering intervention. If Lee had won a third great victory, and on Northern soil, the British government would probably have considered the chances of Union success in the war so slight as to justify interference. But when it became evident, at Sharpsburg, that the South was not strong enough to invade the North, English opinion changed. The London government did not intervene and never came so near intervention again.[2]

By a singular fate, the invasion of Kentucky likewise failed. Kirby Smith won a victory at Richmond and Bragg one at Perryville, but the Confederate commanders did not act together and Bragg let himself be outgeneraled. He fell back into Tennessee, and thus a movement that promised the happiest results came to nothing. Kentucky was definitely lost to the Confederacy, and the Southerners were never again on the offensive in the West.

Yet the South still possessed a strong army in Tennessee, and the prospects were better in the late autumn than they

[1] *Official Records, War of the Rebellion,* Series 1, 19, Part II, 591.
[2] Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams.*

had been in the spring. Everything depended on the commander, however, and just here Jefferson Davis made a vital mistake.

By this time Braxton Bragg had proved that he was not a very competent commander. He was but a passable mediocrity at best, and passable mediocrities seldom win wars. He had not only missed great opportunities but he had lost the confidence and respect of the army. The hour had come for his removal. It was not as if the South had no better soldier to put in his place. Stonewall Jackson, both in independent command and as Lee's principal subordinate, had shown great military qualities. Every consideration urged that he be given the place of Bragg. Yet Davis does not even seem to have thought of him for the Western command. He was content to leave in a secondary position a heaven-sent strategist and to continue in the most vital post in the Confederacy a man who had already shown that nothing much was to be hoped for from him. Still no one else in authority seems to have thought of Jackson, who had shown peculiar genius at the head of a separate army, as anything but Lee's chief lieutenant.

The repulse of the South from Maryland and Kentucky was attended by other discouraging symptoms. The South was beginning to feel the pressure of the war acutely. The blockade had largely cut the country off from foreign commerce, and cotton lay heaped in great piles at wharves and stations. There was a lack of fabrics and metals, while the railroads, unrepaired and unaided by the government, were rapidly deteriorating. The value of the paper currency was steadily falling. Dissatisfaction had become widespread. A number of the newspapers now opposed the government; the trenchant criticisms of John M. Daniel, the famous editor

of the Richmond *Examiner*, and those of the Charleston *Mercury* were especially influential. There was absolutely no censorship or any other form of restraint on the press of the Confederacy, which, paradoxical as it may sound since it was fighting on the side of slavery, was about the freest country that ever went to war.

Jefferson Davis had also lost the support of the politicians. Rhett, Stephens, Yancey and Toombs had been joined by Wigfall. Davis had alienated the influential Texas senator by the same tactlessness that had won him many enemies, that tendency of his to play the master and administer rebuke, that failure to seem to listen to advice. Jefferson Davis was not conciliatory enough for a man in his position; he constantly forgot that he was not the head of an established government but a revolutionary chief with his way to make. He needed to grapple men to him, and he alienated them instead. The planter politicians, reduced to impotence by their own act in endowing the executive with supreme power, were none the less humanly resentful at the consequences of their act. Davis did nothing to soothe their helplessness: they left his presence enraged by curt refusals or tart rejoinders. Not that he meant to offend. His nerves were awry; people annoyed him, and he was never prudent in speech.

He cooled Wigfall's friendship by a sharp reproof for a criticism of one of the presidential favorites, the incompetent General Holmes, who was a complete failure in several responsible positions. The alienation was made into a real breach when Davis found it expedient to find a new Secretary of War, as he was not satisfied with Randolph. He considered James A. Seddon, Joseph E. Johnston and Gustavus W. Smith. Wigfall came to him to offer advice on the

appointment, not knowing that it had already been offered to Seddon. Davis heard Wigfall at length without informing him that the place had been filled. The next day the Texan saw in the paper that Seddon had accepted the portfolio and he was so enraged that he immediately became an enemy of Davis and lost no opportunity to attack him in the Senate for the rest of the war.[1] He was a friend lost by pure inadvertence and perversity.

Walker had been a political appointment, Randolph an experiment. Seddon became Secretary of War after a somewhat long and intimate acquaintance with the President. It is a mistake to think, as men have thought, that Davis desired a mere clerk in his war minister, an agent to carry out orders, and that he was inaccessible to advice. The truth is that he constantly felt the need of advice and sought it, and that a person who had won his confidence had too much influence with him rather than too little. He sometimes allowed his judgment to be clouded by the representations of a favorite. When Lee became an army commander, he was lost to Davis as a resident military adviser. The President now looked for a substitute for him in the Secretary of War, and it was for this reason that he weighed the appointment with unusual care.

As a matter of fact, Jefferson Davis felt acutely the need of a trusted adviser at the end of 1862. To imagine that Benjamin carried most weight with him at this time, and later in the war, is a common error. Benjamin, indeed, was his chief councilor on all matters from the autumn of 1861 to the late winter of 1862. When Lee, however, became military adviser, he supplanted Benjamin in the most important field, that of the conduct of the war. Not that

[1] Reagan, 161.

Davis ceased to repose trust in Benjamin. Benjamin continued to be his adviser on politics and foreign affairs, but his opinion was not often asked on military matters.

Lee was in intimate association with the President from the early spring of 1862 until August, when he went afield. Then, for some little time, Davis was rather at a loss for advice. Randolph did not please him. On the latter's resignation, James A. Seddon occupied the vacant place. This choice has been much criticized, especially since Seddon was chosen in preference to Joseph E. Johnston and Gustavus W. Smith. Seddon was, in reality, an excellent selection. He was not a soldier but a politician and a man of the world, and he got along with Davis better than Johnston or Smith could possibly have done. He was a far abler man than is generally supposed, and he held Davis's confidence until he was forced out of office by congressional opposition early in 1865.

Seddon had great influence with the President from the end of 1862 until the summer of 1863. Then he was somewhat eclipsed, and for some time Davis was again at a loss. At the beginning of 1864, Braxton Bragg became his confidential adviser and held the post for the greater part of a year. He was the last man who influenced Davis's policy and he influenced it to a greater degree than any of his predecessors. These four, then, Benjamin, Lee, Seddon and Bragg, were the intimates whom Jefferson Davis trusted and who had a share in forming his decisions.

James A. Seddon was a lawyer by trade, but he showed a natural talent for administration and marked initiative. His appointment as Secretary of War is evidence that Jefferson Davis was a good judge of men when his affections were not involved. It was always difficult for him to sacrifice a friend

on the altar of expediency, though he could do this when it became evident to him that the sacrifice was imperative. Seddon's selection shows the influence of Virginia on Davis. On coming to Richmond, he was thrown into close relations with several public men, R. M. T. Hunter, James Lyons and others. But in James A. Seddon he found just what he wanted—a cultivated companion and a clear thinker. For a time, Seddon's influence was so great that he had much to do in dictating the military policy, and in some matters he showed such sound judgment that the course of the war might have been affected by it but for circumstances over which he had no control.

Seddon was, like Davis, a valetudinarian. He had served in Congress some years before the war, but at the time of his elevation to the chief post in the Confederacy next to the presidency he was not so well known as he would have been but for his invalid temperament. He was a well-educated man of exact mental processes, a typical Virginia lawyer-planter-politician. He had the appearance of an extreme neurotic, "gaunt and emaciated, with long, straggling hair. He looks like a dead man galvanized into muscular animation. His eyes are sunken, and his features have the hue of a man who has been in the grave a full month." [1] In spite of his looks and health, he had a very considerable degree of vigor and, like his fellow invalid, Davis, lived to old age.

In the lull that followed Sharpsburg, Seddon took hold of the War Department. By this time the war had reached such a pitch that winter failed to put a stop to active field operations. Lee was busy in reorganizing his army, which rose to 70,000 men, mostly veterans of high quality. It was

[1] Jones, 1, 312.

the best army that Lee commanded and somewhat superior to the opposing Army of the Potomac.

The Lincoln government, in its anxiety to push matters, now made its worst blunder, a blunder so full of peril that Southern success might have been the price of it. McClellan, the unenterprising but wary commander of the Union army in the East, was removed before a competent successor had been found. He had shown a natural hesitation in attacking Lee, though the Northern press was demanding immediate battle. Ambrose E. Burnside, a frank experiment, was put in his place. Once more the gods fought on the Southern side. It was a risk of the gravest kind to pit an untried general against such opponents as Lee and Jackson, who welcomed the change and prepared to make the most of it.

In spite of the winter season, Burnside advanced to the Rappahannock in the hope of being able to cross before Lee could concentrate to oppose him. His was the old plan of attacking Richmond from the north. Jackson proposed to let him cross the Rappahannock and to fight him on the North Anna, not far from Richmond, where a victory might be followed up to good advantage. Lee favored this plan. The objection to fighting at Fredericksburg, in front of which Burnside lay, was that the heights on the north bank of the river, crowned with artillery, made a counter-attack most difficult. The Confederates might win a defensive battle but not the decisive victory they needed. On the other hand, a victory on the North Anna might be followed by the destruction of the Union army. The farther the incompetent Burnside advanced from his base, the greater would be his danger. There was every reason for the Southern generals to lure him on.

Davis, however, refused his assent to a battle on the

North Anna. It is supposed that he did so mainly for political reasons, that he feared that a retirement to the neighborhood of Richmond would have a bad effect on the opinion of the world. This is unlikely. Jefferson Davis's ideas of strategy were peculiar. He had little taste for the offensive, but he was always willing to fight on his own first defensive line. He seems to have thought that retreat was the same thing as defeat, and a general who showed a preference for retreating always lost his confidence.

So this great opportunity was allowed to pass unimproved for eccentric strategic considerations. Lee, as well as Davis, was to blame. The former's weakness was a lack of self-assertion. Time and again he allowed himself to be overborne by Davis, though he could not but have been conscious of his superior ability. It is perhaps well for military commanders to have respect for civil rulers, but, as in Lee's case, the virtue can be carried too far. The Southern army took position at Fredericksburg instead of utilizing its heaven-sent opportunity to win a "crowning mercy."

The Northern columns, crossing the river on pontoons, attempted to carry the formidable Confederate position just south of the town and were easily repulsed with slaughter. Army and generals alike lacked confidence in Burnside, and as the beaten troops fell back into the town in the afternoon of a bitter December day a condition akin to panic set in. Burnside, ignorant of the situation, wished to attack again next day, but his subordinates practically defied him and by so doing saved the army. Mutiny has its virtues. When Joseph E. Johnston, then in the West, heard of the battle, he said, "What luck some people have! No one will ever attack me in such a position."

The Union army was defeated and in considerable dan-

ger; it was a question what the Confederates would make of the opportunity. Jackson, unsatisfied with a negative defensive victory, proposed to Lee to strip his men to the waist in the zero cold, in order to distinguish them from the blue coats, and launch them at night in a bayonet attack on the huddled masses of Union soldiery in the town. It would have been a butchery without parallel in American history. Lee refused, for his large humanity shrank from the ultimate horrors of war. The matter well illustrates the difference between the men: Lee fought to do his duty; Jackson fought to win. Burnside was allowed to retreat unmolested to the north bank of the river, supremely fortunate to have escaped from the trap with the loss of only 13,000 men. Never again did the South have such an opportunity to gain a decisive victory.

IX

DILEMMA

INDECISIVE success in the East was counterbalanced by disaster in the West. It was in this field that Seddon intervened. He induced Davis to make Joseph E. Johnston commander of the department of Tennessee and Mississippi, the most important in the country. Davis had distrusted Johnston since the spring campaign in Virginia, but Seddon, like a majority of the Southern people, had great faith in his ability. No general was ever more successful in inspiring confidence than Johnston. Nominally, he was to be the commander of the department, with the two main armies of the West under him; but Seddon's idea went beyond this. He designed Johnston to have control of the operations on the east bank of the Mississippi, with little interference from Richmond. In fact, Seddon groped toward the solution of the Confederate strategic problem. What was needed in the West was centralization of authority under a commander of practically independent powers.

The marvel is that Seddon actually succeeded in impressing his view on Davis, who was jealous of his prerogative as commander in chief. Davis now consented, though perhaps somewhat reluctantly, to give Johnston a free hand. His position was actually more powerful than Lee's. Lee was a departmental commander, but only one army was under him. Johnston's department embraced the armies

of Braxton Bragg in Tennessee and of Pemberton in Mississippi. A second opportunity to play a decisive part in the war thus came to him.

Johnston began by inspecting his new field, without taking command of either army in person. Already there was much distrust of Bragg and Pemberton, but the departmental commander made no suggestions for changes. He left the two generals to follow their own devices.

Bragg fought a murderous battle with Rosecrans at Murfreesboro, or Stone's River, on the last day of the year. As in all of Bragg's battles, the Southern troops were set the task of storming a formidable position held by an army of equal or greater strength. By sheer valor, the Confederates at Murfreesboro drove the Unionists from their cannon-ridged heights, but they failed in an effort two days later to complete the victory; and in the end they retreated from a field made glorious by their futile prowess. Though they had out-fought their opponents, they suffered all the disadvantages of defeat.

Bragg's incompetence as a commander was evident in this battle. It brought to a head the intense dissatisfaction of the army with him. Bragg was of that type of general which always finds a good excuse for failure in the shortcomings of some subordinate. He declared that he would have won a great victory if his generals had obeyed orders and he put one of them under arrest and proposed to court-martial him.

Now, Bragg was one of Davis's closest friends, and Davis went all lengths in his friendship; but it is to his credit that at this juncture he seriously thought of removing Bragg from command. The latter was ordered to report to Richmond, and Johnston was instructed to take charge of the

Tennessee army in his absence. So far did Seddon's influence reach. Indeed, the stage was set for Johnston if he had been a man capable of profiting by opportunity.

Johnston conferred with the President at army headquarters. Davis was driven in December, 1862, to make his first long trip of the war on account of the threatening situation in the West. Vicksburg and middle Tennessee were both threatened by Union forces: the promising summer had given place to a menacing winter, and the outlook for the coming spring was anything but cheering.

Leaving Richmond early in December, Davis went directly to Chattanooga and consulted Johnston. Doubtless Seddon had not altogether dispelled his doubts of Johnston and he wished to see for himself just how matters stood. He also visited Bragg's army at Murfreesboro not long before the battle and went on to Mississippi. It is to be noted how his own military ambition had faded since the summer before. With a great battle pending, he was satisfied to let his generals do the fighting. He now contented himself with the rôle of military administrator, and at that he allowed Seddon a considerable measure of independence. In his own state the President received a warm reception. He made a notable speech at Jackson and again consulted Johnston, though without result. He journeyed in company with Johnston to Vicksburg, which was threatened. Starting eastward, he lingered a few days in Mobile and returned to Richmond early in the new year, weary and ill. His old enemy neuralgia, aggravated, no doubt, by the discomforts of travel, attacked him severely and he was confined to his house until late in February, 1863.

Davis made no move on his return from the West but he had about concluded that Bragg must go. That leader had

taken the extraordinary step of convening his generals as a sort of court on himself and asking for their opinions as to his fitness for command. The subordinates replied that he had lost the confidence of his officers.

Such a display of weakness should have been followed by Bragg's immediate removal. A general who will debate with his lieutenants the subject of his own qualifications for command is manifestly unfit for command. Davis was unfavorably impressed by Bragg's trial of himself and, on January 22, wrote to Johnston asking him to visit the army at once and confer with Bragg and his officers in order to come to a decision as to what the best interests of the service required. At this time, Jefferson Davis, as much as he liked Bragg, was reconciled to his removal and to Johnston's assuming command himself. The retention of Bragg was not the political question it afterward became.

Johnston visited the army and consulted the generals. He reported to Davis that he had talked with Bragg, Polk and Hardee, the corps commanders, and with Governor Harris of Tennessee, as well as with some others. Polk and Hardee lacked confidence in Bragg. Cheatham, a division commander, openly announced that he would never again go into battle under him. Harris thought it best not to remove him. Bragg himself declared that the feeling in the army against him was passing away. Johnston added his own conclusion on the matter, a conclusion that had a good deal to do with deciding the fate of the Confederacy. He said that he was glad that Davis retained his trust in Bragg, that the latter had shown great vigor and skill in his operations and that it would be unfortunate to remove him.

Why was it that Johnston took a view diametrically opposed to that of almost the entire army? If Bragg's opera-

tions had been conducted with vigor and skill, it is extremely unlikely that all of his generals would have been against him. It is difficult to see how any one could denominate the blundering movements that preceded the battle of Murfreesboro as indicating vigor and skill. Johnston was a soldier of great parts. Why did he thus work to keep in command an incompetent officer? Davis had acted fairly, putting Bragg's fate squarely in the hands of the departmental commander; and Johnston deliberately gave an opinion that kept at the head of the most important army in the South a mediocre general who had become intensely unpopular with his men.

The solution lies in Johnston's own weakness. He was the most highly educated soldier in America and one of the ablest, but the dread of responsibility blasted his talents. His is a very singular case. Utterly without physical fear, he greatly dreaded the burden of command. He was still suffering from the effect of his wound and he felt that if Bragg were superseded he must take the latter's place. He preferred to have Bragg command the army rather than command it himself. This explains his unfortunate action. Jefferson Davis is hardly to be blamed for retaining an inefficient officer at the head of the army of Tennessee when the departmental commander so enthusiastically endorsed him. He simply accepted Johnston's decision.

Seddon was bitterly disappointed. He had been working to secure Bragg's dismissal and Johnston's definite assignment to the army. He had sought to strengthen Johnston in every way and to secure for him complete control of his department. What was the result? Johnston was playing the malcontent. With his usual tactlessness, he had unbosomed himself to Senator Wigfall. His position, he said,

was anomalous and unsatisfactory. The two armies in his department were too far apart to coöperate, and while nominally commanding both he commanded neither. He thus bore the blame for failure without receiving the credit for success.

There was some truth in this complaint: the President had not been sufficiently explicit in enumerating Johnston's powers. But now Seddon informed the departmental commander that his powers were very large, that there had been no thought of giving him a nominal command. "I feel well assured," he wrote Johnston, "that it was very far from the intention of the President, as it certainly has been mine, to regard your command in this light." He went on to say that because of the remoteness of the Western armies and the difficulty of directing them from Richmond it was the intention of the government to give the departmental commander much the same authority that the government itself exerted over the armies nearer the capital. It was expected that Johnston would assume the command in person of the army that needed him most; Seddon was disappointed that he had not gone to Vicksburg, when it was threatened. He would now like him to take command of the army of Tennessee, with Bragg as second in command or without Bragg if that suited him better. The Secretary of War ended with a noble expression of friendship: "I should really be pleased to learn candidly from you your own preferences, for while I cannot assure their fulfillment, yet from my appreciation and confidence in you, I should have every disposition to promote and may not be powerless to accomplish them."

All in vain. Johnston would not be persuaded that he had the power to control his department: he insisted that he was left without definite directions as to the extent of his author-

ity. The government certainly sought to show that it regarded him as supreme within the limits of his department, but Johnston would not have it so because he did not wish it so. He did not wish to assume the tremendous responsibility of conducting the Confederate operations in the main theater of war with inadequate means; and on one score he had a most legitimate subject of complaint. The departmental system was demonstrating its hopeless inadequacy; Johnston was asked to defend the Mississippi River while having control only of one side of the stream. The troops on the west bank might as well have been in Virginia for all the good they did to the threatened fortress of Vicksburg on the east bank, though it would have been far easier to concentrate the forces on both sides of the river than to draw from the distant army of Tennessee. Johnston's expostulations over this matter were certainly justified. Yet if he had gone vigorously to work with the means at his command, it is not impossible that the government would have granted him an extension of his powers or ordered the generals in the trans-Mississippi to support him. He did little but complain.

A second time, on March 3, Seddon asked Johnston to express his wishes as to his department. "You think the armies in the West [Mississippi and Tennessee] too remote and distinct to be united, and, yet, if I divine aright, your feeling—your generosity—will not allow you to assume command of either to the temporary displacement of either of the generals commanding there." Such an attitude, Seddon urged, left Johnston no place commensurate with his reputation and ability. He therefore frankly requested the general to take command of the army of Tennessee, with Bragg as his second, assuring him that both the President and the

country desired it. "If General Bragg," he went on, "as frankly I would prefer, were recalled altogether, your embarrassment in assuming his place would be greater than in merely assuming what all acknowledge so cheerfully to be your due, the supreme command." Yet a third time Seddon pleaded with Johnston to put himself at the head of the Tennessee army, declaring that the public dissatisfaction with Bragg was great and that the army could not be relied on to do its full duty under so unpopular a commander.

Seddon had brought Davis to the point of sacrificing Bragg, but Johnston refused to do his part. On February 12, he had again written to the President in commendation of Bragg. He stated that though Polk had lost all faith in Bragg the troops were still confident of beating the enemy. "While this feeling exists," he wrote, "and you regard General Bragg as brave and skillful, the fact that some or all of the general officers of the army, and many of the subordinates, think that you might give them a commander with fewer defects cannot, I think, greatly diminish his value." Johnston repeated that the operations of the army had been well conducted. He added that Polk and Hardee had told him that they had advised the President to remove Bragg and put him in command, but that such a result was inconsistent with his personal honor. The interests of the service, he concluded, required that Bragg be not relieved.

Polk and Hardee had done their duty, risking Davis's displeasure, for they felt that it was imperative to get rid of their incompetent chief. Seddon had worked successfully toward the same end: the President was reconciled to Bragg's going. But Johnston balked them, advising the retention of an officer he damned with faint praise. Davis

wrote to Johnston in reply that he regretted that Bragg's officers had lost confidence in him. "It is scarcely possible, in that state of the case, for him to possess the requisite confidence of the troops." Thus Davis refuted Johnston's singular statement that the officers were disheartened and the men confident. He expressed gratification, however, at Johnston's belief in Bragg. "It is not given to all men of ability to excite enthusiasm and win the affection of their troops." The question of finding a successor to Bragg was difficult, because Johnston did not think that any of Bragg's subordinates should have the place and yet would not take it himself. Davis declared that he could not see how Johnston's assumption of command would involve his honor.

Davis, indeed, was sorely puzzled. Much as he liked Bragg, he thought that Bragg must go and wished Johnston to succeed him. If not Johnston, some one else. But Johnston made Bragg's displacement almost impossible, for he was exhausting all of his resources to find excuses for declining the command of the army of Tennessee and to keep Polk or Hardee from being appointed. Beauregard had been tried and found wanting. Van Dorn or Hindman would not do. Jefferson Davis cannot be well blamed, under the circumstances, for retaining Bragg, unsatisfactory as he was. There was probably no officer competent for the command except Jackson, who, as we remarked before, by the strangest of oversights, was entirely unconsidered.

It is only fair to say, however, that Jefferson Davis made still another effort to determine Bragg's fitness for command and the exact sentiment of the army in regard to him. Late in March he sent Colonel William Preston Johnston, an officer of good judgment, to visit the West and report on the situation. Colonel Johnston carefully inspected the

army of Tennessee. He talked frankly with the higher officers. Leonidas Polk, the junior corps commander, told him plainly that Bragg would have to go, that he should be transferred to another field. Polk suggested that Bragg's appointment as adjutant-general somewhere else would leave the way open for putting Johnston at the head of the army. Colonel Johnston also conferred with General Johnston. The latter declared that the condition of the army was excellent and that it lacked "no physical element of success." He said nothing of the moral element of confidence in its commander. Johnston stated that great credit was due Bragg and Pillow for building it up: Pillow, the chief conscript officer, had sent 10,000 men to it.

Colonel Johnston's report on the army of Tennessee is interesting. He stated that there was a great want of bayonets and that the cartridges were too large for the Enfield rifles used by the infantry. Transportation was tolerably good. The troops were well supplied with clothing but lacked shoes. Subsistence was difficult to obtain. The position of the army at Tullahoma was not good and was defended only by slight entrenchments, as Bragg believed that heavy earthworks demoralized troops. This is important as revealing Bragg as a thoroughly old-fashioned soldier, dead to the developments of modern war. The old-fashioned soldier abhorred fieldworks and wanted troops to stand in close order and be shot down *en masse*. Such archaic ideas were superseded by the new methods of the very next year, when trench warfare became firmly fixed in military science.

This report might have disposed of Bragg but for Johnston's continued defense of him. As late as April 10, 1863, he declared that he was unfit for field duty and that

Bragg was consequently still needed. This seems to have ended Davis's efforts to find a successor for the command of the army of Tennessee. Its fate was to rest in the hands of Braxton Bragg, though there was a bitter feud between the commander and his subordinate generals and a most intense dislike for him on the part of the rank and file. But Johnston simply would not accept the baton, and Bragg stayed on largely because there seemed to be no one else to put in his place.

If Johnston was unwilling to displace Bragg, who had served for some time in important capacities, he need not have felt any such delicacy in the case of John C. Pemberton, in command of the army of Mississippi. This force was of almost greater importance than the army of Tennessee, for it guarded Vicksburg and the Mississippi Valley. Davis has been much blamed for his appointment of Pemberton, but the officers in the service capable of independent command were few and it was impossible to avoid some experimenting. Pemberton was a man of mediocre intellect and feeble character, though he seems to have been a good talker and he undoubtedly impressed the President as a soldier of talent. Already, early in 1863, his army and the people of Mississippi had begun to lose faith in him. He was entirely incompetent for so difficult a duty as was assigned him—enough to have taxed any one—and Johnston might well have considered relieving him himself or recommending a successor. Both Polk and Hardee were better officers; indeed, it would have been difficult to find a division or corps general of less capacity than Pemberton. Yet in March Johnston wrote to Pemberton complimenting him on the vigor he had shown in his defense of the Mississippi against Grant. Surely, if Davis continued Pemberton in command

as well as Bragg, it was not greatly his fault, since the departmental commander supported both of these inefficient soldiers.

Davis and Seddon had expected Johnston to use the interior lines of communication and concentrate troops in Tennessee or Mississippi as the need arose. In this way they hoped that the superior forces of the Union might be equalized at the point of vital contact. But Johnston declared that communication between Tennessee and Mississippi was too slow to allow of much shifting of troops, though a railroad running parallel with the Mississippi River would seem to have offered facilities for just such strategy.

Johnston was in doubt as to Grant's intentions. From time to time reports came that the Union general was sending large reënforcements to Rosecrans in Tennessee, where the main attack might be made. Pemberton, however, sent word that Grant was stronger than ever and that Vicksburg appeared to be his objective. Still Johnston feared that Bragg's army was in danger and appealed to Davis to reënforce it. The President sought to draw troops from Beauregard in Charleston, but Beauregard sent only a small force.

The Union, by having the initiative, enjoyed an advantage over the Confederates. By threatening Tennessee, Arkansas and Louisiana simultaneously, the Union strategists were able to secure that dispersal of the Southern forces needed to bring about Grant's success at Vicksburg. There were sufficient bodies of Confederate troops within concentrating range of Vicksburg to have overwhelmed Grant if they had been brought together. The government, however, by making the Mississippi River the boundary between departments had erected a barrier between its own forces. It had failed to send troops to the trans-Mississippi when they were

needed there and might have been spared, and now the trans-Mississippi troops did not wish to cross the river to assist in the defense of Mississippi. Johnston had no power over the troops on the west side of the river, though they were but a short distance from Vicksburg; he was obliged to draw support for Pemberton's army from Bragg, hundreds of miles away.

As for Davis, he would not interfere with the trans-Mississippi, in spite of Vicksburg's danger. He feared raids into Confederate territory from Memphis and New Orleans, and besides the defensive dispersal was his natural strategy. He hated exposing territory by making concentrations. He, therefore, did not give Johnston the troops he so sorely needed. They remained in Arkansas and Louisiana to oppose the Union feints.

Johnston, also, was at fault. By April, 1863, Pemberton's army had become the more important of the two forces in his department, and he should have gone to Vicksburg and taken command. He was badly needed. But he would not go, and his reluctance to undertake field service was again alienating Davis. Seddon still supported him with all his power, but Seddon was beginning to lose favor as it became more and more evident that Johnston was not the man to be at the head of the department of Tennessee and Mississippi. Seddon's partial loss of influence was destined to play no inconsiderable part in the occurrences of the eventful summer of 1863.

As April opened the stage was set for the tragedy that brought about the downfall of the Confederacy. Up to this time, the fortune of war had, on the whole, been favorable to the South. The Unionists had not only failed to conquer Virginia but they had seen Washington threatened.

That Lee could hold out indefinitely was almost certain. At any moment he might become an active menace to the North. The Confederates had lost most of Tennessee, but still had a foothold in the center of the state. Missouri had been abandoned to the Union, but Arkansas was not yet gone and Louisiana was held by large forces.

Vicksburg was the weakest point in the Confederate chain, because the Union could bring to bear naval strength as well as military against it, and the most notable Union successes had been won by a combination of army and navy. The Confederate forces at Vicksburg were too small and were commanded by one of the least efficient officers in the service. Grant's army, on the other hand, was large and ably commanded. If the unenterprising defensive continued to be the Confederate policy in the West—if no vigorous measures of concentration were taken—the chances were that the Union would succeed in its main strategic aim of securing the Mississippi River from its source to its mouth. It was on this that the success or failure of the war turned. The control of the Mississippi meant more than the severance of the Confederacy into two unconnected fragments: that severance had already been partly effected by the policy of the Confederate government. The Mississippi was the great road of the West; it was the pride of the West, the symbol of greatness. If the South could hold the mighty river, the Union would be foiled everywhere: it must give up the contest. If the Union could take the river from the South, it could, sooner or later, complete the conquest of the seceded states. People sensed, if they did not put in words, the supreme importance of the Mississippi in the struggle.

The weakness of the Confederacy in the West was in its

leadership. It was successful in the East because of two great men, Lee and Jackson. In the West, with its armies commanded by Bragg, Pemberton, Hindman, Kirby Smith, it was on the down grade. Yet it had splendid troops in the West as well as in Virginia. The victories of the Confederates in the East and their defeats in the West have led some people to conclude that the Eastern army was better than the Western. This is not the case. If anything, the Western troops of the Confederacy were better than the Eastern. The reports tell us of the magnificent appearance of many of the Western regiments, composed almost entirely of tall and stalwart men. They were Nordics of the finest type, pioneers, soldiers, country builders. They showed their valor on many fields and if they had been led by great generals they would, in all probability, have won victories that would have eclipsed the Second Manassas and Chancellorsville. Ill led, they almost always gave the Union armies great trouble to defeat them. Sometimes, as at Chickamauga, they won battles in spite of the bad generalship from which they suffered continually from Shiloh to Johnston's accession to command in 1864.

Leadership was imperatively demanded in the West by the beginning of May, 1863. Reënforcements from the East were also needed, if the trans-Mississippi was not to be drawn on. Johnston was a very able strategist but not a great administrator: as a departmental commander he was wasted. Nobody was in his right place in the West. Johnston should have been at the head of Pemberton's army, Pemberton in command of a division. Bragg would have been a better departmental commander than a general. Above all, a commander in chief was needed for all the armies, to bring about a coördination of effort. As it was,

the Confederacy was divided into a number of fields, all independent of the others and all very imperfectly directed from Richmond. There was Lee in Virginia, wholly distinct from the rest of the military forces. There were the armies of Tennessee and Mississippi, which worked together to some extent. Beauregard went his own way as commander at Charleston. Mobile was another center. Across the Mississippi were the forces of Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas, all practically independent of each other. The government had no accurate information as to the number of troops in the field and their equipment and temper. It largely groped in the dark. This condition of affairs was not precisely the fault of Jefferson Davis. It was mainly due to the lack of a general staff or of a commander in chief given full power to order the armies as he saw fit. And largely because there was no central military authority, because Jefferson Davis in Richmond could not perform the double functions of head of the nation and director of the armies, the Confederacy fell.

X

THE GREAT CRISIS

IN the spring of 1863 the prospects of the Confederacy were still good, though not so good as in the autumn before. The country had suffered from a winter of discontent, caused by the valuelessness of cotton that could not be exported and by the dearth of food in some places. Not that there was an actual scarcity in the country, but a situation somewhat suggestive of that of Russia in 1917. There was grain enough in Georgia and other food-raising districts to support the army and the civilian population, but there was a want of transportation and a general disinclination to sell supplies for Confederate money, now rapidly depreciating. This disinclination to take Confederate currency continued and had much to do with the lack of foodstuffs in the market. Besides, the government had begun to impress provisions at purely nominal prices and to lay taxes on farm products, a policy that irritated the farmers and restricted production. Added to this was a want of organizing ability, due in part to the scarcity of real business men in the country and in part to the failure of the government to employ such as there were for economic organization. The government of Jefferson Davis was traditional and unoriginal: it followed the old administrative routine and ventured into few of the activities that modern governments enter in war time.

It is not certain that the government could have directed the resources of the South, even if it had tried. In 1917-18, Woodrow Wilson was able to wield despotic power over the whole energies of the American nation, but the Southerners of 1863 were not the tame Americans of our day, accustomed to the exercise of authority. They were individualists who opposed extensions of governmental jurisdiction even in the throes of a struggle for independence. Thus when the government attempted to make the people give up cotton and tobacco culture, in order to raise food, it met with little success. Toombs flew into a royal rage at such an invasion of his rights and continued to plant a full crop of cotton. Other planters followed his bad example.

It is possible, nevertheless, that Jefferson Davis might have exerted a large influence over the economic life of the country if he had gone to the people themselves. But he was under the sway of the traditional idea of the presidency —that military direction was his overshadowing duty. He failed to understand, as was quite natural under the circumstances, that the true course for a ruler to pursue in a national crisis is to make himself the national leader. The head of a nation can afford to leave details to others, for to care for details is much easier than to impart confidence to a public drooping under the trials of war. The Southern people were peculiarly susceptible to the personal touch: they could be aroused to any pitch of sacrifice, but they needed to hear a voice and to see a leader in their midst. Jefferson Davis, intensely busy with his war-office duties, showed himself to the people but little. The lower South was largely left to shift for itself, for the President seldom felt at leisure to stir from Richmond. He spent himself un-

grudgingly in the performance of technical duties, giving too little care altogether to the matter of inspiring the country.

What the South needed, and never found, was a national leader. It needed a combination of demagogue and practical executive such as perhaps Robert Toombs came nearest to being, or else a great soldier: instead, it had a dignified senator who busied himself in the details of his work and was seen little in public. There is nothing surprising, then, in the fact that Davis's popularity steadily waned through 1862 and was at a low ebb in 1863. The masses were intelligent enough to realize that the government had been caught unprepared in the early spring of 1862 and that the country had been rescued by the generals; what they failed to see was that Jefferson Davis's quick and resolute action on the draft and his appointment of Lee to command had made victory possible. Naturally, the feats of Lee and Jackson attracted attention while the quieter work of the President was overlooked.

At the same time that Grant was preparing to lay siege to Vicksburg, the North was resuming operations in Virginia. Joseph Hooker replaced the unhappy Burnside in command of the army of the Potomac, which in April, 1863, numbered 110,000 men. It was Hooker's part to defeat Lee and capture Richmond while Grant took Vicksburg.

Lee had only 50,000 men with which to oppose Hooker, for Longstreet was absent with a part of his corps. Hooker aimed to hold Lee at Fredericksburg with half of his army while the other half crossed the Rappahannock River above the town and encircled the Confederates. It was the pincer strategy, made famous by the German generals in the World War.

Lee, whose ability to devine an opponent's plans has

seldom been surpassed, read Hooker's design and frustrated it. Taking the counter-offensive with great energy, he sent Jackson on a wide flanking march around the Union right wing on May 2. Jackson effected an utter surprise and rolled up the right of the Northern host with complete success, but he was mortally wounded in the hour of victory. Lee finished the work most brilliantly on the two succeeding days, and Hooker was glad to withdraw his beaten army across the Rappahannock. The Northern spring offensive thus broke down immediately and disastrously.

The price of the triumph was the life of a genius. Comparisons between such soldiers as Lee and Jackson are invidious, but it may safely be said that Jackson was one of the foremost strategists of modern history. Still a young man, he was improving every day and he must soon have come to the command of an army and the opportunity for the full exercise of his great talents.

Jefferson Davis had never fully understood the taciturn and somewhat eccentric officer, who had once actually threatened to resign when overruled by the War Department. As Jackson was dying, however, the President suddenly became appreciative and sat "unable to think of anything but the impending calamity until twelve or one o'clock." [1] And when the thunderbolt of war lay in state in Richmond, Davis dropped a tear on his face and stood looking at him for a time, almost overcome. He was beginning to realize the greatness of his loss.

Chancellorsville, though saddened by the fall of Jackson, was of great importance to the Confederates in that it gave them the initiative at the moment of supreme crisis. The war had continued for two years: it could not go on forever,

[1] *A Memoir*, 2, 382.

and it was evident to thinking men that it had reached its height and that the events of the summer would probably be determinative. The Union army, defeated at Chancellorsville, was in no condition to assume the offensive. The triumphant Southern army was ready for aggressive action. This was the situation on the right of the long battle line that reached from the ocean to Indian Territory. In the center, at Chattanooga, Bragg confronted Rosecrans: the armies were evenly enough balanced to neutralize each other. In Mississippi Grant was moving against Pemberton, who covered Vicksburg with his field army. West of the river, the Unionists were making a great demonstration against Louisiana. What would the Southern generals do since Chancellorsville gave them the chance to make some bold move?

At the beginning of May, Grant was closing in on Pemberton. Davis made an effort to reënforce him, but on May 6 Pemberton telegraphed that only 5,000 troops had come from Alabama, the main point depended on. A few thousand men had been drawn from Bragg, and thus Pemberton's army had been somewhat enlarged though it was still insufficient. Seddon attempted to get further reënforcements from Beauregard, but that general could spare no more men. On May 7, Davis telegraphed Pemberton these fateful words: "To hold both Vicksburg and Port Hudson is necessary to a connection with the trans-Mississippi. You may expect whatever is in my power to do."

Johnston was uneasy because Pemberton had dispersed his forces in seeking to protect the approaches to Vicksburg. On the first of May, and again two weeks later, he urged Pemberton to concentrate but failed to go to the scene of action and take the reins himself. In fact, he did not go to

Mississippi until the first of May and then only at the express order of the President, who was alarmed at the situation. Davis, who was making efforts to get troops for Pemberton from some quarter or another, advised him to call for mounted volunteers. Pemberton sadly replied that no reliance could be put on emergency soldiers. The President was indulging in hope rather than calculating very exactly the available forces at his command.

Johnston was at the capital, Jackson, with a small army. Seeing that Pemberton was about to be enclosed, he ordered that general to move eastward and join him. Pemberton, who was somewhat confused by Davis's instruction to hold Vicksburg and the departmental commander's order to abandon it, acted rather feebly. Still he advanced from the shelter of his fortifications, only to be outgeneraled and beaten by Grant at Baker's Creek and the Big Black and driven back into the city. Johnston, knowing well the issue of a siege, on May 17 directed Pemberton to escape from the side of Vicksburg not yet enclosed. But Pemberton was somewhat demoralized by his defeats and did not wish to leave his earthworks again. After a council of war, he decided to disobey his superior and hold the town. He telegraphed Davis that he had been beaten because he had felt obliged to obey Johnston's orders and so had advanced beyond his defenses. This was on May 19. Thus, at this moment, Davis learned that Pemberton had been defeated and shut up in Vicksburg. A situation had been created which the government had not desired but which had to be faced. Both Vicksburg and the army were certainly lost unless measures were taken for their relief.

Pemberton has been generally condemned for his decision, but there is much to be said in defense of his action.

If he had evacuated Vicksburg, the city would have been lost, and the city itself, not Pemberton's small army, was Grant's objective. The last link in the connection with the trans-Mississippi would have fallen into Union hands, for Port Hudson must have been lost with Vicksburg. The Union strategy would have accomplished the great purpose at which it had aimed since the beginning of the war. With Vicksburg in his hands early in the summer, Grant might have completed the conquest of the state of Mississippi before the end of the campaign or have turned against Bragg. Pemberton, by holding on to Vicksburg, committed Grant to a perilous siege and gave the Southern government the chance to capture his army. All in all, then, Pemberton's decision, though not the result of enlightened calculation, seems to have been a wise one in that it saved Mississippi from immediate conquest and put Grant in a dangerous position. Unfortunately, however, Pemberton showed little energy in his preparations for the siege, leaving the city insufficiently provisioned, though large stores had been accumulated in the neighborhood. The army starved when it should have had a sufficiency.

The Confederate government considered the situation created by the siege of Vicksburg. The city had successfully stood a siege the preceding summer and was almost impregnable in the hands of a resolute soldier. Thus there would be time enough to evolve a policy for its relief. Not to relieve it meant the loss of the trans-Mississippi and the utter depression of the whole country. A mistake now would probably be decisive of the fate of the war.

Davis was accustomed to rely on Seddon for advice in all the theaters of the war but Virginia, where Lee naturally dominated. The great general had won the right to

follow his own judgment in all matters that concerned his army and his terrain. Lee had always considered his operations as totally distinct from those in the West. He gave little thought to the war elsewhere, concentrating his energies on the direction of his own army. It had been possible for him to lose sight of the West without disaster in 1862, when the fall of Richmond impended and the West was no harder pushed than Virginia. That campaign had won comparative safety for the Confederacy in the East while the situation in the West constantly grew in threat, but Lee still continued to think of his own problems rather than of the general military situation. It thus happened that when the victory of Chancellorsville freed Lee from all apprehension for Virginia for the immediate future and allowed him to turn his thoughts elsewhere he knew little of the needs of the West. Yet the West could no longer be ignored by the successful commander of the army of Virginia. It was the problem the Confederacy had to solve.

Here, as elsewhere, Lee's one fault as a commander appeared. Accustomed all his life to serve a firmly established government with rooted precedents, he could not adapt himself to the conditions of a state waging a revolutionary war for existence. He thought that he could do his duty in his own sphere and leave the government to look out for the other armies and the other fronts. He could not do this and win the war. The inexorable logic of events demanded that he become the military leader of the whole Confederacy, in fact if not in name, and bend his great powers to the task of coördinating the movements of the various armies.

He might have become an invaluable adviser to Davis on the entire field of operations. If he had gone West early in 1863, when he could have left his army in safety under

Jackson, he would have come to understand the dangers that threatened the country as a whole and he would have altered his own military policy. If he had demanded a concentration at Vicksburg, the concentration would have occurred, for Davis would not have refused to follow his advice on such a matter. Lee did not lack the mental gifts of a strategist of the very first order, but he was destined never to exert those gifts to the full. To the end he remained the commander of a single army instead of the generalissimo for which nature intended him.

Davis, jealous as he was of tactless interference, would not have resented Lee's advice on the West. Indeed, the President at this time really yearned for an adviser. He had more confidence in Lee than in any one else and late in 1863 he appealed to him to go West and find out what ailed the cause there, but Lee would not go. He was rooted in Virginia. The President actually had no very confidential adviser at this moment, for Seddon's star was waning. Seddon had advocated Johnston's Western appointment and had constantly supported that general, and now Jefferson Davis had once more become disgruntled with Johnston—this time, permanently.

Something had to be done, and nobody saw this more clearly than Davis himself. If Lee stood on the defensive behind the Rappahannock, Vicksburg would be surely lost. Then Bragg might be overwhelmed and the whole forces of the Union would be concentrated on Lee. The war would be won in detail while the Confederates looked on. What would Lee advise and Davis do in the great emergency that confronted the country? That was the question.

There were three courses promising large results. Lee might invade the North and seek to win the war at a stroke.

Or a part of Lee's army might be sent to strengthen Bragg for an advance against Rosecrans. Lastly, Johnston's weak army might be reënforced for an attack on Grant and the relief of Vicksburg.

The first plan was the easiest to execute but the most dangerous. An invasion of the North in 1863 by the small Southern army, which must advance in the teeth of the larger Northern army, was a perilous undertaking. Defeat would mean the loss of the West and possibly the speedy end of the struggle. Yet Lee hoped that the threat against Washington would relieve the pressure in the West by drawing troops to the East. There was a chance that this would happen, but not a very good chance.

Yet this plan was possibly better than that of sending a detachment from Lee's army to Bragg or Johnston. In Bragg's unskillful hands a larger army might have gained no advantages whatever: there might have been only another fruitless Murfreesboro. Johnston, with more troops, would still, in all probability, have lacked the audacity to attack Grant. Lee would have been reduced to impotence for nothing.

The situation called for Lee himself to go West—to enlarge his duties and powers beyond the command of the Virginia army—and take the supreme command there. And if he had studied both the Eastern and Western fronts, he must have seen that the necessities and opportunities were far greater in the latter than in the former. Washington, in 1863, was so strongly fortified and garrisoned that to take it was a desperate adventure. Yet to win a victory without taking Washington—to win and retreat into Virginia—would hardly have ended the war. And it would be necessary to hazard a battle quickly in the North, because the

Union, if given time, could concentrate overwhelming numbers against Lee's small army.

The risks of going West were no greater than the risks of invading Pennsylvania; they were not so great. By taking a corps to other fields, Lee would expose Richmond, but the line of the Rappahannock was difficult to force and the Union army was not fit for an immediate offensive. Longstreet could probably have held the Rappahannock for a month, and in a month many things may happen. Paradoxical as it may sound under the circumstances, the opportunity for the Confederates to win a decisive victory was better in the West than in the East. Grant had given an opening by laying siege to Vicksburg. He was at a great distance from his base of supplies and wholly dependent for his communications on the Mississippi River. Heavy artillery might sink or stop his transports, and then he would be in a precarious position indeed. With the river closed, he must have faced the probability of surrender. If Lee had studied the war as a whole, he would have seen this opportunity not merely to win a battle but to capture an army. Grant's defeat would almost certainly have turned the tide in favor of the South. The expulsion of the Union forces from Tennessee would have followed and Kentucky, which in 1863 was overwhelmingly Confederate in sentiment, would have been thrown open to the Southern arms. The Northern people, already showing signs of war weariness, would probably have refused to support much longer a losing game. Such were the possibilities that would have attended Lee if he had struck West with one of his corps and his best artillery.

Lee might first have united with Bragg, driven Rosecrans back and then cut Grant's river communications, or he might have proceeded directly to Mississippi and joined

forces with Johnston. In either case, Grant would have been in great danger. He would have been between the garrison and the relieving army and would have been forced to fight at every disadvantage. If Grant were taken, Lee might combine all the forces within reach and advance toward the Ohio River at the head of 120,000 men. Such was the opportunity offered by the siege of Vicksburg.

Davis and Seddon wished to reënforce Johnston in Mississippi for the relief of Vicksburg. Seddon particularly advocated it. For the week of May 7-13, 1863, Davis was confined to his house by one of his frequent attacks of illness. In this time, Seddon, who was in charge of the war office and who sometimes acted without consulting his chief, wrote to Lee desiring him to send Pickett's division to Mississippi. Lee, ignoring Seddon, replied to Davis that to detach troops from his army meant the loss of Virginia —that it was a choice between losing Virginia and losing Mississippi. The President sent Lee's letter to Seddon with the statement that he approved of it. This was a snub for the Secretary of War, who was much concerned about the West, but Seddon had lost some of his influence with the President while Lee was all-powerful.

On May 15, Davis was back in his office, and on this day a council of war was held. Lee, Davis and Seddon were closeted for a long period; for a time Generals Stuart and French were admitted to the conference. Lee's views prevailed. It was decided not to send troops to the West, but to invade Pennsylvania instead, for it was at this time that the invasion of the North was determined upon.

Lee was wholly responsible for the decision. Both Davis and Seddon had preferred the relief of Vicksburg, but Lee

now won them over to his plan. He had a natural reluctance to seeing the fine army he had built up dismembered and a part transferred to other generals in other fields. In this he was right: he was far abler than any other Southern general to conduct aggressive operations. Only he was wrong in selecting the invasion of Pennsylvania instead of going to the rescue of the collapsing defensive system in the West. Very wrong.

The invasion of Pennsylvania in 1863 was so risky a movement that it should never have been tried. Lee's means were too slender for such an effort. The year 1861 had been the time for the Southern offense; now the South did not have the strength for it. Its defensive line was breaking down; whole states were slipping from its grasp as well as the Mississippi River; and therefore it had no title to such a luxury as the offensive. The movement into the North was unsound strategy; and, curiously enough, on the very day on which it was decided on, May 15, Beauregard wrote condemning it. Longstreet did not like it and made many objections.

Lee's reasons for the invasion, as given, are unconvincing. He declared that he wished to relieve Virginia for a time from the burden of the war and find food for his hungry troops in the fertile fields of the North. Besides, a threat against Washington might draw Grant from Vicksburg. Beyond this, Lee seems to have had no definite strategic objective: if he had, it is not on record. Perhaps he thought that another victory, won on Northern soil, would bring about the desired European intervention and the end of the conflict. Such a result might have followed, but it is by no means certain that it would, and a fruitless victory in Pennsylvania would have been more than counterbalanced

by the fall of Vicksburg. All in all, it would seem that the invasion of Pennsylvania offered few advantages to compensate for the terrible risks it entailed.

As a matter of fact, Lee's predilection for the East led him into a serious miscalculation. The case was not, as he put it, one of losing either Virginia or Mississippi: later in the same year, when his army was smaller, Lee sent a part of it West without losing Richmond. What was done in September, 1863, could have been better done in May. The real issue was whether the Confederates would cooperate, East and West, and possibly win, or continue to maintain two separate wars and lose. Lee's plan continued the old system of isolated operations. He had not schooled himself to see the war as a whole but only his own theater of action.

Jefferson Davis appears to have consented to the invasion of Pennsylvania with some reluctance. Conversant as he was with conditions on all the fronts, he could not fail to see that the siege of Vicksburg threatened the existence of the Confederacy and might be the determining event of the war. It is certain that he would not have given his consent to Lee's plan if the general had not urged it warmly. This seems to have been the one occasion of the war when Lee asserted himself strongly, and it was the one occasion when he happened to be wrong. Davis must have been deeply impressed by Lee's confidence in his ability to win a victory north of the Potomac or he would never have left Vicksburg to its fate. He has been blamed for preferring his own judgment to that of his generals, but in this case when he went against his judgment he made the mistake that decided the outcome of the war. Yet he cannot well be censured for letting Lee's wishes be decisive, because Lee

had proved his right to decide the action of his army by winning great battles.

In giving way to Lee, the President displayed a patriotism so lofty that it deserves a word of comment. Not only did just strategic considerations urge the relief of Vicksburg rather than the risky Northern offensive, but the claims of sentiment and self-interest as well. In sending Lee to Pennsylvania, Davis turned his back on his own state and his own estates. He abandoned his people and his property for the chance of winning a decisive victory elsewhere.

The decision was made on May 15. But on May 19, Davis learned that Pemberton had been beaten and shut up in Vicksburg, and in the next few days the dispatches confirmed the report. He also learned of Pemberton's decision to remain in Vicksburg rather than try to retreat. The situation was so serious that Davis determined to bring it before the cabinet for final consideration.

The military problem was debated for the whole length of a day, May 26, 1863. All the members of the cabinet seem to have been present, though Lee was not at the council. There were the President, grave and thoughtful, taking little part in the debate; Benjamin, quick, dapper, debonair; Memminger, small, restless, antique looking; Seddon, death-like, calm, convincing; Mallory, heavy and silent; Reagan, tall and bearded, almost dominating the meeting with the fullness and intensity with which he spoke.

The cabinet, in general, seems to have felt that the military directors had already decided on the course of action and that there was no use to advocate a change. One man, however, the Postmaster-General, was unalterably opposed to the invasion of Pennsylvania. He was deeply moved,

for he was from Texas and he felt that the Eastern offensive was tantamount to an abandonment of the West. He urged, instead, that Lee should feint against the North and then send a part of his army to Mississippi. His eloquent plea for the West fell on dull ears: it was decided to send Lee across the Potomac and to obtain reënforcements for Johnston from the Gulf states, where there were few troops enough already. In truth, the cabinet left Pemberton to his fate and staked everything on the invasion of the North.[1] In such manner did Jefferson Davis turn from the defensive to the offensive, definitely abandoning the strategic conception with which he had begun the war.

Reagan could not sleep that night, he tells us, he was so oppressed by the fatality of the decision. Early next morning, which was Sunday, he ventured to disturb the President by requesting him to call another cabinet meeting to reconsider the question. Davis good-naturedly consented, but before the meeting was held Reagan learned that the cabinet was irrevocably committed to the invasion plan and he abandoned his opposition in despair. Some time later Seddon wrote Lee that he fully approved of his offensive in the North, that it was high time to give up the defensive. From this it would appear that Jefferson Davis was solely responsible for the cabinet council and that he convened it because he was far from satisfied that Lee's movement was the best policy. The overwhelming support given Lee by the cabinet must have reassured him or perhaps led him to feel that he shared the responsibility for the decision with others. He was soon to learn, however, that success was credited to others and failure blamed on him-

[1] Reagan, 152. The agreement of Reagan and Jones fixes May 26 as the date of the cabinet meeting.

self. The country at large never even knew that the cabinet had passed on the invasion of Pennsylvania.

Davis seems to have had misgivings to the last; indeed, he was so torn with anxiety that he was ill for the next few weeks and in bed at the time of the battle of Gettysburg. He vainly sought to reassure himself about Vicksburg, greedily seizing on Pemberton's dispatches announcing the defeat of Grant's assaults on the city. He is said to have written Lee a letter cautioning him not to go too far afield. Lee, for his part, had serious reason to complain of the government. He had stipulated as a part of his plan that a skeleton force should be stationed in northern Virginia under Beauregard to feint against Washington from the south while he himself went on into Pennsylvania. In this way he hoped to prevent the concentration of the Union forces against himself. Davis agreed but finally wrote Lee that an army could not be raised for the purpose. As Lee had asked for a demonstration, not a serious movement, it would appear that he was ill-served in this rather important particular. The Unionists were relieved of fear for Washington from the South and were enabled to turn their full force on Lee.

Lee moved into Pennsylvania, with Hooker following. At this moment, the last of June, the Union general was superseded by George Gordon Meade, who assumed the command under all the disadvantages inseparable from such hasty changes. The hostile armies came into collision at Gettysburg in the afternoon of July 1, 1863. The meeting was somewhat accidental, but Lee had his troops well in hand and knew that a conflict was imminent. It is probable that he wished to fight while Meade was still new in the saddle.

The engagement began with an attack of two of Lee's three corps commanders, A. P. Hill and R. E. Ewell, on a Union force at Gettysburg. The Northerners, overwhelmed by numbers, resisted with desperate valor and merely retired to a ridge of steep hills south of the town, where they took position. If the Confederates had followed up their advantage without delay, they might possibly have stormed the heights and won the battle then and there. But they had suffered heavy losses and they halted, uncertain what to do.

Lee, coming on the field about this time, at once realized that fate had put in his way a great opportunity. His force of 65,000 men was on the field or in the vicinity, while only about half of Meade's army of 100,000 was at hand. Meade was caught concentrating but not concentrated, with his hurrying regiments stretched out many miles to the rear. It was Lee's one chance to fight with the advantage of numbers on his side. Instant action was necessary, however, for in a few hours the whole Union army would be present.

The Southern general held a brief council of war with Hill, Ewell and Early, looking over at the purple heights where lay the Union army as they darkened in the summer twilight and directing his subordinates to assault them at dawn. The latter had no stomach for a venture so desperate and succeeded in persuading Lee to pass on the task to Longstreet, who was absent. They reported that the ground on their right was more favorable to attack than that in front of their two corps. Lee, therefore, decided to have Longstreet make the assault. He is not to blame for this change of plan. A commander is forced to rely on the reports of his subordinates, for in the hour of battle decisions must be made quickly and there is little

time to verify information. Possibly, too, Lee was influenced by the fact that Longstreet was his most experienced corps commander.

Longstreet, when given his orders, demurred—almost remonstrated. He, likewise, flinched from an attack that must be bloody and might be fatal. He advised a movement to the rear of the Union army, but Lee impatiently refused, since he desired to fight before the Union army was fully concentrated. He repeated his directions for an attack in the early morning.

It was a situation in which everything depended on prompt action. Longstreet most probably would have carried the heights, steep as they were, if he had advanced at dawn, for at that time the position was thinly held. But he dallied through the day, insisting that he could not move until one of his divisions arrived, and did not launch his troops against the Union lines until late in the afternoon. By that time the whole Northern army had come up. Numbers, as well as position, were now against the Confederates.

Here, it would appear, Lee made his mistake. He should have spurred Longstreet to prompter action, or, failing in that, have abandoned the attack. A general, however, is forced to take great chances if he would achieve large results. Indeed, the art of war is the game of taking chances —of making a swift guess and then acting on the guess. The end of military education is to enable a commander, in the distraction of battle, to guess correctly from the faulty and misleading information at his disposal, to approximate the truth. Lee had been right in his decision to attack at dawn: he probably calculated that even in the afternoon the Union army was not fully concentrated, and so he let the assault proceed. He had taken desperate chances from

the moment of assuming command of the army and had escaped disaster: he now took one more chance. This time he lost.

Longstreet's effort was very powerful when, finally, he made it. He handled his men admirably in action, and they were superb veterans, the best soldiers then in the world. They stormed the wooded mountainside, in spite of obstacles and of the artillery and musketry fire, and almost carried the crest and won the battle. But exhausted by their exertions and retarded by the valiant Union defense, they were held at the very crest and could go no farther. Darkness then came on.

The battle had not been won, but still Lee did not think that it was lost. To withdraw now would be to acknowledge defeat at a moment when victory was no longer a luxury but a necessity. The West had been sacrificed to gain this opportunity. Lee, consequently, determined to take yet another chance. He entrusted Longstreet with a second attack, to be made the following day—this time on the Union center.

Longstreet, now almost at the point of mutiny, mismanaged the enterprise badly. After a furious cannonade the line advanced, but only a small force, Pickett's division from eastern Virginia, with some North Carolina regiments, persisted in the charge. The Southerners, advancing with iron discipline through an unspeakable hell of shrapnel and rifle fire, carried the Union trenches with the bayonet and planted their red flags. For a moment they seemed to have won the battle. The next instant they were engulfed by masses of Union infantry and killed or captured.

Lee was now obliged to retreat into Virginia, which he did in safety. The Union army was too shattered to make

a vigorous pursuit. When the news of the battle crossed the sea, Europe began to believe in the power of the North to conquer the South. Hope of intervention faded from Southern minds.

Lee's admirers have been hard put to defend Gettysburg. Yet he is not censurable for fighting there, where he had an opportunity to win a victory, but for the invasion of Pennsylvania itself. He is to blame for preferring what was at best a dubious chance to gain a battle to the relief of Vicksburg, a matter of the most extreme importance. He came nearer than might have been expected to success. He failed at Gettysburg simply because he did not have a subordinate capable unhesitatingly of taking the terrible risks through the taking of which victory was alone possible. The assault on the Union position, an adventure attuned to the brain and nerve of Jackson, was too much for the other generals. Lee, used to Jackson, overrated them: that was his error.

Vicksburg fell while Gettysburg was being fought. Even if Lee had won the battle the river fortress would have fallen, a commentary on his calculation that the invasion of Pennsylvania might draw Grant from the siege. The Confederacy had changed its strategic methods without profit. It had remained on the defensive when the offensive promised much: it had taken the offensive when its defensive line was crumbling. And now it faced final defeat.

Pemberton had waited in patient trust while the government decided on the Pennsylvania enterprise instead of relieving him. On May 21, Davis sent this characteristically vague dispatch: "I made every effort to reënforce you promptly, which I am grieved was not successful. Hope that General Johnston will join you with force enough to

break up the investment and defeat the enemy. Sympathizing with you for the reverses sustained, I pray God will give success to you and the brave troops under your command." Davis was praying instead of calculating, a habit of his. Pemberton understood that he was lost unless Johnston could do something for him.

Davis had an idea that Johnston had enough troops to break the investment, if he would only use them. Somehow he had a tendency to evade arithmetic: his imagination did not like the cold logic of figures. Johnston nerved himself to make an effort, informing Pemberton by the intrepid messengers who still made their way through the Union lines that he would proceed against Grant. He had no idea of winning a victory with his small force, but he thought he might be able to create such a diversion that Pemberton could slip through the investing lines. Grant's skill and energy frustrated the plan. The Union army was so fortified against attacks on its rear that Johnston would not advance.

So the days went by; June wasted while the besieged army still repulsed assaults and looked for succor and Lee was starting on his fateful march into Pennsylvania. On May 26, Davis had sent Lee the following dispatch: "Our intelligence from Mississippi is, on the whole, encouraging. Pemberton is stoutly defending the intrenchments at Vicksburg, and Johnston has an army outside, which I suppose will be able to raise the siege, and combined with Pemberton's forces may win a victory." [1] Doubtless this was the argument used in the cabinet meeting that very day, on which it was finally decided to send Lee across the Potomac. It shows Davis's obvious misgivings, but it also shows that

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 51, Part III, Supplement, 717.

he did not fully realize that Pemberton was lost unless help came from the East. This is what he should have understood.

There was only one way to get sufficient troops to break Grant's investment and enable Pemberton to escape—by bringing Bragg's forces to Mississippi. The generals west of the river would not help: perhaps they could not help, for their troops were bitterly opposed to serving on the east side of the Mississippi. Nothing was to be hoped for from the East or the far South. Johnston now knew, beyond question, that he could order his forces as he saw fit, for Davis had taken the pains on June 10 to inform him of his powers.

Still the departmental commander did not want to use his powers. He did not wish to take the responsibility of ordering Bragg's army to Mississippi, which meant the abandonment of Tennessee. Neither did the President desire to give the order for the relinquishment of a state. Concentration was always hateful to him, for concentration meant inevitable sacrifice. In a letter to Kirby Smith he once said, "The general truth that power is increased by the concentration of an army is, under our peculiar circumstances, subject to modification. The evacuation of any portion of territory involves not only the loss of supplies, but in every instance has been attended by a greater or less loss of troops." Yet the only effective way to save Pemberton was by the use of Bragg's army. The situation admirably illustrates the strategic unsoundness of the invasion of Pennsylvania. In the absence of aid from Lee, the rescue of Pemberton was premised on the abandonment of Tennessee and the exposure of Alabama.

Johnston would not order Bragg to Mississippi; Davis would not. Between them the catastrophe occurred, just

as a baseball drops to the ground between two hesitating fielders. Seddon attempted to spur Kirby Smith, in the trans-Mississippi, to action, but Smith did nothing but explain why it was impossible for him to do anything. Late in June, Johnston, driven by the dire necessity of the case, took the extraordinary step of appealing to Joseph Davis, the President's brother, to use his influence to induce the government to order Bragg to Vicksburg. He confessed that he was unwilling himself to issue orders that meant the giving up of entire states.[1] It was a question of losing Tennessee or the whole Mississippi Valley, and the head of the nation should decide it, not a general. No response came to this appeal.

Johnston then turned despairingly to Kirby Smith, who advanced toward Vicksburg and then allowed himself to be halted. There was no other resource. Pemberton surrendered on July 4, though he might have held out some time longer. Thus the Confederacy, by a dramatic coincidence, met overpowering disaster in both East and West on the very same day. Of the two events, Gettysburg was the less important. Vicksburg was a far greater victory. Gettysburg, however, was such a marvelous drama of blood that it overshadowed the less picturesque but more solid accomplishment on the Mississippi. Yet Grant's triumph taught the world that the Union had finished a mighty task and that the reduction of the South was to be expected.

Davis, Johnston, Lee—all are responsible for the loss of the river fortress. Lee preferred to risk a campaign in the North to the rescue of Vicksburg. Davis is somewhat to blame for giving up the defensive policy at the most inauspicious moment, when the country was threatened as

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 51, Part III, 969.

never before. A distant counter-offensive is never the way to relieve such a situation as the siege of Vicksburg: Grant did not detach a man from his army on account of the threat against Washington. Neither Davis nor Johnston could make the decision to abandon Tennessee and concentrate all the Confederate forces in order to save Pemberton. For lack of a sound strategic plan Grant had triumphed.

Gettysburg has been much overrated in the character of a decisive battle. It was, in reality, very indecisive. Even if Lee had won, it would probably not have been decisive. The Union army, driven from its heights, would have fallen back toward Washington and would have been very heavily reënforced. Lee's great losses would have, in all likelihood, forced him to fight another desperate battle in a disadvantageous position or to make a retreat. The battle was not felt to be a decisive defeat by the Southern people; indeed, it did not much affect the imagination of the South at the time. The army thought that it had merely failed to accomplish the impossible. Its morale was but little lowered. The fall of Vicksburg was much more severely felt, for the whole lower South knew what the loss of the Mississippi meant. The cotton states began to despair while the army of Virginia was nearly as confident as ever. If the man power of the South had been sufficient to replace the losses of the summer, Gettysburg would not have been considered much more decisive than Fredericksburg, a battle it rather resembled.

On the other hand, the capture of Vicksburg was the greatest success won on either side in the whole war. An army of 30,000 men; a strong fortress, the check to the Union navigation of the Mississippi; and the severance of

the Confederacy—such were the fruits of Grant's memorable victory, won by audacity and resolution. The whole lower South was now at the mercy of a vigorous offensive. Vicksburg was the turning point of the struggle.

The double catastrophe of July, 1863, came as a bitter blow to Davis. For days he hardly ventured out of the house, so prostrated was he by the overthrow of his high hopes. Seddon was likewise ill from anxiety and chagrin. Both President and Secretary of War had relied on Lee, and Lee had failed them. Mississippi was lost and yet Virginia was not saved.

Late in July, Davis, who took care to give no open expression to his disappointment, wrote Lee, "In various quarters there are mutterings of discontent, and threats of alienation are said to exist, with preparation for organized opposition. There are others, who, faithful but dissatisfied, find an appropriate remedy *in the removal of officers who have not succeeded.*" (Italics ours.)

This was not a hint for Lee's resignation but, in reality, a pledge of support. But the general, who had been deeply hurt by his failure, replied, "The general remedy for the want of success in a military commander is his removal. . . . I have been prompted by these reflections more than once since my return from Pennsylvania to propose to your Excellency the propriety of selecting another commander for the army." Another letter of the same tenor came later.

Davis responded with such a generous and touching expression of confidence and friendship that Lee was completely reassured and the always pleasant relations of the two men were strengthened. In one respect Jefferson Davis was noble: he never blamed a general for disaster if he felt that the general had done all in his power to command suc-

cess. In fact, want of success sometimes did not move him when it should, when the failure was the general's fault. Still it is a rather rare trait in rulers—since rulers bear the burden of failure—to sympathize with subordinates who fail.

Inevitably, much of the blame for the fall of the Confederacy rests on Jefferson Davis. Yet it cannot be said to have fallen because of his positive mistakes. In the crucial year of 1863, when the outcome of the war was determined, he was not directing military operations but was mainly engaged in giving support to the two leading generals of the country, who occupied the two most important posts wi[th] a wide discretion. They were not hampered by instru[c]tions. The government made strenuous efforts to supp[ly] Lee's and Johnston's wants. It drafted energetically; ma[n]ufactured munitions busily; seized food ruthlessly. It arm[ed] the Western forces with better rifles than were carried b[y] the Union troops. If the incompetent Bragg and Pembert[on] remained at the head of armies, this was less Davis's fa[ult] than Johnston's, for Johnston would not supersede the[m] or recommend successors. Davis has been especially ce[n]sured for keeping Pemberton in command at Vicksbur[g], but Pemberton, though he might have saved his army, cou[ld] not have prevented the loss of Vicksburg and the Mississip[pi] River. The Mississippi could have been saved only by [a] different strategic policy, and the determination of t[he] strategic policy did not rest with Pemberton. Vicksbu[rg] and the trans-Mississippi were really lost on May 26, 186[3] when the cabinet decided on the Eastern offensive instead [of] the Western defensive. That was the fatal move in the gam[e].

Bitterness and recrimination were the order of the da[y] in the Confederate camp as the summer waned. Beauregar[d]

had favored the strengthening of Bragg's army instead of the movement into Pennsylvania; and, on July 21, with Vicksburg fresh in mind, Bragg wrote him that his views were identical. "Failing to impress the idea on others who control, I was put strictly on the defensive, and have struggled with insufficient force until at length depleted so far that safety compelled me to fall back." This might seem a reflection on the government, but it was in reality a hit at Johnston. Bragg complained that Johnston was falling back in Mississippi, yielding ground that could not be regained. If the army of Tennessee had been ordered to Mississippi, a victory might have been won. About the same time Polk suggested to Davis that Johnston's army should be united with Bragg's and the whole force turned on Rosecrans. This was now the only plan worth trying, and before long Polk's suggestion was adopted.

Bragg's change of attitude toward Johnston was important. Bragg was close to Davis, and Davis felt that Johnston was largely responsible for Pemberton's capture: he thought that Johnston should have ordered Bragg to Mississippi, just as Johnston thought that the President should have ordered it. In February, 1863, Bragg had lauded Johnston, for the departmental commander had saved him from dismissal. But Bragg was not of a grateful disposition and he had come to dislike Johnston and to disbelieve in him. He was soon to become Johnston's bitter personal enemy. Thus to the other misfortunes that weighted the Confederacy in the latter part of the disastrous year, 1863, was added a feud between the two principal commanders in the West. It was not likely, then, that the close of 1863 and 1864 would prove a more prosperous season.

XI

DOWNHILL

THE military situation had now changed definitely for the worse. And with military disaster inevitably came other troubles. The politicians had long since been estranged from Davis and were in opposition or retirement. Toombs himself, leaving the army because unpromoted, entered the Senate. Yancey had passed away soon after Gettysburg. The firebrand of secession died of despondency, for he had lost all hope of the cause. Stephens was busy at work fostering dissatisfaction with the government.

Congress still bent to the President's will in the belief that dissension was suicidal. The fast-growing opposition to Davis, however, found its opportunity in the state governments. It was one of his weaknesses that he was seldom very close to men, and he had completely fallen out of touch with the various governors, who were important personages. As long as things went well, state opposition to the national government was weak, but with the coming of disaster the states began to show an ominous tendency to act independently. They began to resent the burdens put on them, especially the never-ceasing drain of the conscription.

Serious disaffection showed itself in North Carolina as early as the end of 1862. The able governor, Zebulon Vance, who had sent many thousands of men to the Con-

federate armies, now proposed to organize a state army for the sole purpose of protecting the community.[1] He further disobeyed the order of the government to burn cotton left in the vicinity of the enemy's forces and generally assumed an insubordinate attitude. He made himself a nuisance by forever demanding troops to guard points in North Carolina, regardless of the general military situation. Something like a cleavage appeared in the state between those who were thoroughly loyal to the Confederacy and those who were clamoring for peace at any price. At Raleigh, in September, 1863, a mob sacked the office of the *Standard,* accused of being a Unionist newspaper, whereupon another mob retaliated by attacking the ardently secessionist *Journal.*[2] This latter incident was indeed an evil omen.

Disaffection was only one of many difficulties. Already in 1863 the financial situation was appalling. By the spring of that year paper money had sunk to ten to one for gold, and new issues, forced out by the expenses of the war, continued to depress it. Some cotton was sent out of the blockaded ports and goods still came in from Europe, but not enough for the most pressing needs. Fabrics were hardly obtainable, and luxuries were enormously expensive. An enterprising blockade-runner brought in a cargo of corsets and sold it almost overnight to eager women.

The pressing need was food. In this land of plenty starvation had begun to stalk. The army already in 1863 was living on half rations, while there was also great want among the civilian population of Richmond and other places. The old trouble, lack of organization and transportation, was at

[1] Jones, 1, 198.
[2] Ibid., 2, 45.

bottom to blame. Though Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania was largely prompted by the hope of finding food and though stark hunger was everywhere in the theater of war, in the lower South, particularly Georgia, there was no lack of foodstuffs. But transportation was fatally defective and the people did not willingly surrender grain and meat to requisitioning commissaries and tax gatherers. Nor did they care to sell provisions for money that was steadily declining in value.

At the first of April, 1863, a food riot broke out in Richmond, which the government had great difficulty in provisioning. A crowd of a thousand or so women marched on the food shops, looted them and then took to general pillaging. Troops were called out, and the mayor threatened to fire on the rioters. At this juncture Jefferson Davis appeared on the scene, drawn from his seclusion by the excitement of the moment. Mounting a dray, he appealed to the women to disperse. He pointed out that the seizure of food without payment would inevitably bring famine on the city. "You say you are hungry and have no money," he went on. "Here is all I have; it is not much, but take it." He threw his money in the crowd. "We do not desire to injure any one, but this lawlessness must stop. I will give you five minutes to disperse; otherwise you will be fired on." [1]

His few words had their effect, and the rather feeble riot came to an end. Yet the incident was ominous, for it revealed the extent of the suffering among the poor and the refugees. It was a symptom of the dissatisfaction that was now as widespread as the boundaries of the Confederacy.

As the year 1863 wore on, the opposition to the national

[1] *A Memoir*, 2, 375.

government steadily grew and it continued until the end of the war. The North Carolina supreme court defied the Confederate act suspending the writ of *habeas corpus,* granting writs as it saw fit.[1] The courts of Georgia and of other states acted in the same way. The governor of Mississippi protested against the impressment of slaves, though they were impressed to keep them from falling into the hands of the enemy. Governor Smith of Virginia, like Vance of North Carolina, granted many exemptions from military service. Governor Allen of Louisiana made trouble because Davis ordered the disbandment of the state battalion of home troops. Governor Brown of Georgia lay awake o' nights thinking up projects for the embarrassment of the President. Everywhere there was a want of coöperation on the part of the state authorities with the national government. Localism was rending the country.

In the cases of Governor Vance of North Carolina and Governor Brown of Georgia, the resistance to the Confederate authorities was outspoken. It must be said, in justice, that Jefferson Davis was in the right in these unfortunate controversies. Brown was forever denying the demands of the government. At the last of 1863, Vance urged Davis to open peace negotiations. Davis replied, with entire truth, that he could not treat for peace with Washington on any other basis than surrender, that Washington would listen to nothing else. Later Vance requested that the *habeas corpus* be not suspended, at the same time alleging that the government was unfair to former anti-secessionists. The charge was false, and Davis made a crushing retort in which he put the North Carolina governor entirely in the wrong. Though the victory was his,

[1] J. E. Schwab, *The Confederate States of America,* 190.

the only thing the President accomplished in this acrimonious controversy was to strengthen the unreasonable Vance in his prejudice against the government. Jefferson Davis was wholly unable to win over an adversary: he knew nothing of the art of conciliation.

The states' rights opposition to the Confederate government inevitably raised against Davis the charge of unconstitutionality, which was continually urged from 1862 until the end of the war. According to his opponents, the President was an habitual violator of the constitution, hardened in trampling on the states. It was quite natural for contemporaries to make this charge, for states' rights were the ostensible justification for secession, the pet phrase in every mouth. The strange thing is that the reproach has modern echoers. Writers to-day sometimes criticize Jefferson Davis for the centralizing tendencies of his administration.

What would they have, these critics of a man who sought to save his country in the only possible way? Do they imagine that a government can pause in the midst of a struggle for existence to make sure that none of its laws infringe strict construction interpretations of the constitution? The charge is unjust. The fact is that Jefferson Davis was as true to strict construction and states' rights as it was possible for a man in his position to be. But it was not possible for him to regard the South as a confederacy of sovereign states. The South was a nation fighting for independence, and the leading lower South politicians, with the exception of Stephens, looked on it as a nation rather than as a league. The politicians of the border states were the great sticklers for strict construction, for they were real doctrinaires. Jefferson Davis himself might have remained a doctrinaire if he had been out of office, but

practical considerations he could not ignore made him a nationalist.

The reasons for the attack on Davis were not theoretical, not political. They were practical. By 1862, the war was crushing the states and they wished relief. They wished to carry on the war as the Revolutionary War had been conducted—to have the national government assign quotas of troops and supplies to the various commonwealths, leaving fulfillment entirely with the latter. If the Confederate government had done so, its existence would have terminated by the autumn of 1862, for the states would not have acted with the necessary energy. Only by national action was it possible to secure the thousands of recruits needed and needed at once. Consequently, Davis wisely forced the draft on a reluctant Congress. The draft was at once denounced as unconstitutional, as were other measures—the Impressment Act, the Tax in Kind of 1863 and the suspension of the *habeas corpus*.

The first of these laws authorized commissaries to seize provisions wherever they might be found on the payment of a nominal price. The Tax in Kind was a tithe on farm products and was probably necessary in view of the fact that the troops were starving. The suspension of the *habeas corpus*, always for a limited period, enabled the government to defeat the efforts of the state courts to thwart conscription. Drastic as were these acts, they were seemingly unavoidable: war cannot be made without soldiers and food.

Jefferson Davis, however, might have anticipated criticism of nationalist measures in a country of doctrinaires, for the South suffered from constitutional hypochondria. Davis himself had once been much of a doctrinaire. In only one way could opposition have been softened, and that was by

personal influence. Anything can be obtained from the Southern people by personal influence, and the South would have troubled little over the "autocracy" of Jefferson Davis if he had been genuinely popular, if he had known how to woo the populace.

He did not woo the people; probably he could not. Tight in his shell, he issued orders to Congress instead of beguiling it with the hospitality he could dispense on occasions, and he made no effort to justify his acts to the country. It was his aloofness, more than his centralizing methods, that alienated the South. He came to be looked on and disliked as a haughty dictator when he was, in reality, only a shy, sensitive egoist. It was this shyness, this scholar's instinctive love of seclusion, that kept him day after day poring over the papers in his office instead of going out and grappling the people to him. This was his true failure: he could not fire the imagination of the masses, make himself a real national leader. He was the monk in a cell rather than the preacher of a crusade.

The political situation began to be alarming in the late summer of 1863, after Gettysburg and Vicksburg. The people were greatly depressed by failure in both the Eastern and Western fields after the promise of the spring. Davis, reading the omens aright, saw that something must be done to remedy the situation. Something had to be gained to compensate for the losses of the summer. Lee wished to attack Meade, but he had had his chance; under the circumstances another invasion of the North was unthinkable and little would be gained by merely driving Meade back on Washington. The South needed a more fruitful victory.

Looking over the ground, Davis and Seddon decided to try the other front. They decided to concentrate against

Rosecrans and attempt to drive him out of Tennessee. The redemption of that state would go far toward neutralizing the effect of the fall of Vicksburg; it would reanimate the South. Unfortunately, the President and Secretary of War did not give serious consideration to the question of the capacity of the commander of the army of Tennessee to carry out an offensive campaign. Yet they must have had a certain distrust of Bragg, for they resolved to send Longstreet to him with a part of his corps. Longstreet advised this move, and he was the leading officer in the East after Lee. Gettysburg had not much hurt his reputation. Davis and Seddon calculated that Longstreet would strengthen Bragg sufficiently to enable him to win a victory, and in this estimate they were right. They did not foresee that Bragg would throw away the victory when won. They also thought that Lee could hold Meade in check without Longstreet. Again they were right: a daring and important strategic movement was carried out without disaster to the East. Thus late in the war, and on a limited scale, the Confederates devised and attempted the proper strategy. If essayed earlier, with attention to transportation, it might have proved decisive.

The West was in urgent need of help. Unless the war was to be fought on the theory that Virginia was the only theater of importance, something had to be done to rescue the trans-Alleghany section. The Confederate cause in the West had resembled a burst bladder since the fall of Vicksburg. The trans-Mississippi, now cut off, lapsed into a separate existence, while to the east of the great river Tennessee was lost, Mississippi was half lost and Alabama and Georgia were in danger. Halleck and Grant had accomplished great things.

Bragg, at Chattanooga, had been neutralized for months by a somewhat larger army under Rosecrans. In August, 1863, Adjutant-General Cooper at Richmond suggested to Bragg that he advance. Bragg took this as a hint from the President, who had sent him troops from Mississippi and was preparing to send him forces from Virginia. Hesitating for some weeks longer, he finally decided to take the offensive just before Longstreet arrived to his aid. He lost many excellent opportunities to strike Rosecrans in detail and eventually attacked the Union army when it was fully concentrated in a strong position. Longstreet had but arrived with a part of his corps. The newcomer from the East, accustomed to criticize even Lee, was dumbfounded by Bragg's methods. He thus characterized them: "To wait till all good opportunities had passed, and then, in desperation, to seize upon the least favorable one." [1] This is a harsh but not untruthful criticism of Bragg's strategy: he seldom fought a battle except under every possible disadvantage, as if wishful to see what prodigies of valor his men might accomplish. In the West, the generalship was on the Union side, and that is mainly why the Union won.

The control of Bragg's army at Chickamauga was actually in Longstreet's hands, since Bragg was in the rear, and Longstreet was a tactician of great ability. For once the Southern troops in the West were skillfully directed. The result was impressive—a sufficient answer to those who suppose that the Western troops of the Confederacy were not as good as the Eastern. The Confederates simply drove the Unionists before them with irresistible fury, all but a fragment under Thomas, which held out behind heavy en-

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 52, Part II, Supplement, 560.

trenchments until night. Then, Thomas, too, retreated into Chattanooga.

Chickamauga was the most remarkable victory gained in the whole war. It was won by an ill-jointed force, which had been so mishandled as to lose all confidence in its commander, over a well-disciplined and better-equipped Union army holding a fortified position and led by a good soldier. It was a triumph due to the desperation of valor and to Longstreet's admirable tactics.

Bragg, however, whose nerves had completely broken down under the strain, did nothing to follow up the victory, though Rosecrans was shut up in Chattanooga without provisions and in great peril. Longstreet now made no secret of his contempt for Bragg, who let day after day go by without acting. Bragg was at open feud with his generals. He resorted to his old habit, accusing his subordinates of misconduct in the battle. He declared that if his orders had been obeyed Rosecrans would have been destroyed. This tendency of Bragg's illustrates his fundamental weakness as a soldier. He seems to have thought that a battle can be arranged with the precision of a peace maneuver. Before an engagement he gave his orders to the corps commanders and then did nothing more until it was over. He made no effort to see that his orders were carried out. Instead, he was always far from the firing line, not from fear but from nervous collapse due to responsibility. When things went wrong, and things invariably went wrong, he relieved his feelings by denouncing his generals.

After Chickamauga, Bragg suspended Polk, whom he particularly disliked, and D. H. Hill from their commands. He proposed to place Polk under arrest and try him by court martial. Davis, however, at once quashed this, for

Polk was a popular officer much respected throughout the West. The President was depressed by the situation in Bragg's army, at the friction between the commander and his subordinates and his widespread and growing unpopularity. "The opposition to you, both in the army and out of it, has been a public calamity," Davis wrote him, "in so far that it impairs your capacity for usefulness. I had hoped that the great victory which you have recently achieved would tend to harmonize the army and bring to you a more just appreciation of the country." [1]

Nothing was done with Polk, but D. H. Hill received stern treatment. This able division general who had served under Lee was demoted and sent East. Apparently he had taken the lead in a plot of Bragg's generals to get rid of the commander. Rendered desperate by his incapacity, they had made what was, in reality, a patriotic effort to save the army. They knew that Bragg was Davis's favorite and that they had everything to lose by incurring his enmity. Longstreet had lent them aid and encouragement, but Bragg seems to have been afraid to strike at the famous corps general. The latter wrote to Seddon after Chickamauga, "I am convinced that nothing but the hand of God can save us or help us as long as we have our present commander. . . . It seems that he cannot adopt or adhere to any plan or course, whether of his own or some one else." [2] Indeed, Longstreet's derision of his superior made it difficult for the two men to act together in the same army.

Davis felt that the situation was so serious as to require his personal interposition. Consequently, he went West for the second time, reaching Bragg's camp at Missionary Ridge

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 52, Part II, Supplement, 535.
[2] *O. R.*, Series I, 30, Part IV, 706.

on October 9. He remained there for four days. Pemberton accompanied him, hoping to find a command, but gave up the idea when he learned of the hatred with which the soldiers regarded him.[1] Both Davis and Bragg would have been willing to entrust Pemberton with a corps, but they bowed to circumstances. The vanquished general still held the President's confidence. "Pemberton is everything with Davis, the devout," wrote an officer; "his [Davis's] intelligence is only equaled by his self-sacrifice in regard for others."

Davis had several confidential interviews with Bragg. The latter offered to give up his command, but declared that if he remained he would not countenance disobedience in his subordinates. Davis, who seems to have thought that this fustian indicated strength of character, urged him to stay, promising full support. This was an act of almost inexcusable folly on the President's part, for he was aware of the army's dissatisfaction with Bragg and of the almost mutinous disposition of the higher officers. Officers and men alike might have been wrong, but victory could hardly be hoped for under such circumstances. Yet Davis had put out of his mind the thought of removing Bragg. This decision was partly due to the difficulty of finding any one capable of commanding the army, but partly also to the President's rising indignation at Bragg's country-wide unpopularity and to the open criticism of the government for retaining him. The people were attempting to dictate to the President! It was here that Davis's doctrinaire tendency revealed itself. The leader of a revolution, absolutely dependent on the good-will of the people and the faithfulness of the army, he yet conducted himself with something of the

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 30, Part IV, 734.

air of a divine-right ruler. His prerogatives as President were not to be encroached upon, forsooth!

Davis's course was infatuated. He might have put Longstreet in Bragg's place without loss, for the former was a far better officer than the latter. He never even thought of doing this. He had resolved on retaining Bragg at any cost. Why? Less than a year before he had been willing to sacrifice Bragg for the good of the service, and then Johnston had balked the scheme, ardently urged by Seddon. Now he was risking the army, the war, everything, in order to keep Bragg. Why? Because the country was demanding Bragg's removal, and Davis wished to teach the country that it could not give him orders. But more, because Bragg had gained a greater hold on him than any other man had had. The great defect in Jefferson Davis's character was his supersensitiveness, his craving for approval. Bragg thoroughly understood this weakness and played on it. He never opposed Davis's suggestions, and usually followed them. He wrote frequently to the President and asked advice, a thing the President loved to give. He even flattered Davis grossly, but to his liking. Flattery had to be very, very gross to fail with Jefferson Davis. The summer of 1863 had been a horrible nightmare to the President; he was depressed, doubtful of himself. Bragg made him once more confident of himself, of his military talent. Bragg was the one officer in high place who did not jar on him, who was sympathetic. Bragg demanded less and complained less than the others, for even Lee had become somewhat querulous. Is it to be so much wondered at, then, that Jefferson Davis committed the fatal mistake of keeping in command an officer whom the country had judged and found wanting?

Davis, in his desire to retain Bragg, now took a step that led to irreparable disaster. It was evident that Longstreet and Bragg could not continue together, and the President suggested to the commander that the lieutenant be detached for duty in east Tennessee, where Knoxville might be taken. Bragg willingly agreed, because he was glad enough to get rid of Longstreet. Longstreet jumped at the chance of having an independent command, for he had always chafed at being a subordinate. Thus the astonishing decision was reached of dividing the small army of Tennessee at the very moment that the Union army opposing it was receiving heavy reenforcements. Many have wondered at the wild movement, not understanding that it was owing to Davis's wish to keep Bragg. Only by sending Longstreet away could Bragg be retained. Otherwise, there was danger of mutiny.

The President returned to Richmond, thinking that he had straightened the tangle. Longstreet, Polk and Hill were gone or going, and apparently Bragg could manage to get on with the other generals. In reality, everything was much worse than before. The country was enraged at Bragg's continuance in command, and the matter was becoming more than military; it was growing into a political issue. What was more ominous, the army was demoralized by the loss of the able corps general and his efficient troops from the East. The army thought that Longstreet's detachment at such a critical moment was only one more illustration of Bragg's generalship and its discontent quickened into anger. The stage was rapidly preparing for the greatest tragedy of the war.

After leaving the army, Davis went to Selma, the seat of great munitions plants, where he was welcomed by a throng. He made a stirring appeal, warning the people that peace

could come only through victory and that it was useless to look to Europe for aid. The way to end the war was to annihilate Rosecrans. Turning eastward, he slowly made his way to Charleston, speaking at many places and showing a cordiality new for him. In fact, he was making an effort to hold the confidence of the public, which the disasters of the summer had sapped. If tried earlier, this attempt to woo the masses would have been most wise, and it might have accomplished something even now if it had been accompanied by the removal of Bragg. But it was useless to seek to enlist the people's support for a military policy universally condemned: Jefferson Davis could not set his solitary judgment against public opinion with any hope of success. If Bragg had been another Marlborough or Napoleon, he must have failed on account of his intense unpopularity. The President lingered several days at Charleston, trying to reanimate the South Carolinians, who, like the people of all the states, were profoundly discouraged. He returned to Richmond without having accomplished anything helpful by his exhausting journey. He had really done himself more harm than good, for his enemies had seized the occasion to spread rumors that the trip was preliminary to a dictatorship.

So far as military affairs went, he had thrown away the last chance of the South to win. Grant arrived at Chattanooga and took command of the Union forces, an ominous event for the unlucky Bragg. He presently moved against the Confederate lines on Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. There could be no question of the outcome of the conflict. A superb army commanded by a master of war confronted a disorganized force which was actually at the point of mutiny. When Longstreet marched away, the

army was ruined. His prowess partly made up for Bragg's incompetence. The soldiers, now left with their hated and despised commander, would probably have deposed him and defied the government if no engagement had occurred.

For this reason the Confederate army cannot be judged by its conduct at Missionary Ridge. The position was very strong, and if the troops had fought in their normal way Grant would probably have been repulsed with heavy loss. But it was a peculiar situation, involving much more than the feeling of the army alone. The country as a whole was protesting against Bragg, and the soldiers knew it; they were profoundly affected by it. When Grant's troops clambered up the steep slopes of Missionary Ridge, the Southerners, refusing to fight longer under their detested leader, abandoned the field, except on one wing, where Cleburne, who was in command, held his lines and repulsed the Unionists. Here a beloved division general kept his men to their duty. Bragg was greeted with cries and jeers by his fleeing soldiers, who retired into Georgia. The shattered army rallied at Dalton.

The victory of Missionary Ridge was not the less important to the Union that it was easy. Hitherto, from Shiloh to Chickamauga, the Confederates in actual conflict had outfought their opponents. At Chickamauga, they had simply driven the Unionists from the field by the fury of their onslaught. But now, at Chattanooga, they fled from the face of the foe. Their morale was shaken, and they never entirely regained it. For the rest of the war, the Union troops in the West were definitely better than the Confederate. Grant was, indeed, lucky that he fought the army of Tennessee in the hour of its demoralization, but

his is the luck that usually attends genius. The same luck played its part at Vicksburg—the luck of audacity.

Jefferson Davis was to blame for this great disaster to the South. He was not, primarily, responsible for Gettysburg and Vicksburg. But for Missionary Ridge, which, coming on top of Gettysburg and Vicksburg, settled the fate of the war, he was responsible. He had deliberately closed his eyes to the intense discontent of the army and the country with Braxton Bragg, keeping that officer in command in spite of every warning and at all costs. The bitter dissatisfaction of all the subordinate generals, which had lasted for more than a year; the almost mutinous conduct of Longstreet and Hill; Bragg's constant accusations of everybody —surely these things should have shown any man of sound judgment that catastrophe was at hand. But the President had ignored the omens. And now, for the first time in the war, a Southern army had behaved badly in the face of the enemy. Defeat had become *débâcle*.

A storm of criticism swept the country. The people had condemned the President for retaining Bragg, and the judgment of the people seemed confirmed by the terrible defeat. Men did not reflect that the defeat was due to the public mood in this instance, and not to Bragg. He had been beaten before a gun was fired at Missionary Ridge. All that they knew was that the unpopular general had been routed, and that the President had kept the unpopular general in command. The result was that the confidence of the Southern people in Jefferson Davis, already greatly impaired, was completely wrecked. From this time on the country was really in opposition to the government.

Jefferson Davis had brought this on himself. In some ways the head of a republic wields much greater power than

a king: he can venture on more extreme and arbitrary action than any king; he can override the constitution at will if he has public opinion behind him. But he may not without great danger attempt to carry out his legitimate functions against a definite popular conception. Davis, of course, had the right to make and retain generals; but he very stupidly thought that he could exercise this right in defiance of the country. Missionary Ridge points the moral.

His proper course was clear: he should have transferred Bragg after the battle of Chickamauga, in the winning of which Bragg had really no part. In such a critical moment as the autumn of 1863, he should have courted popularity by every means in his power. Instead of doing this, he committed the unpardonable super-sin of supporting the most unpopular soldier in the country after Pemberton. He may, indeed, have been right in thinking that Bragg was an abler general than any other man who could have been put in his place. This is beside the question: public opinion had condemned Bragg, and Davis was dependent on public opinion for success. There was absolutely no hope for the Confederacy if the people, who had to bear the burdens and make the sacrifices, lost faith in it.

After Missionary Ridge, the dissatisfaction and depression flowing from defeat crystallized into the personal unpopularity of Jefferson Davis. He bore the blame for the whole series of catastrophes which had wrecked Southern hopes and turned victory into disaster. People did not reflect that the Pennsylvania invasion and the defeat of Gettysburg had much to do with the unhappy situation; in fact, they thought little of Gettysburg. Johnston's failure to do anything to relieve Pemberton escaped their attention entirely. What occupied their minds at the close of

1863 was the remembrance that Jefferson Davis had appointed Pemberton to high command and that Vicksburg had fallen, with an army, and that he had retained Bragg and Missionary Ridge had followed. He was looked on as the ultimate author of Southern woes.

Thus, the net result of the campaign of 1863 was the ruin of Davis's prestige. He had never been popular with the masses because he was dignified and austere. He had long since fallen out with the politicians because he considered them too little. But until the autumn of 1863, the Southern people looked on him as a great man. Their confidence, first disturbed by the invasions of 1862, had more or less revived with the victories of that summer. They still trusted Davis, though Lee and Jackson overshadowed him. They gave the government loyal support, making great sacrifices for it. Until the end of 1863, the number of malingerers, except in a few mountain districts, was surprisingly small; in many sections of the country every able-bodied man was in the army. But in 1863 the people, as a whole, lost confidence in the government and never regained it. From this time, desertion grew and flourished; criticism was rife; despair replaced hope. The shadow of failure lay across the country—of failure due no less to psychological causes than to physical. The people did not look with trust and love to the head of the nation.

As 1863 closed, Jefferson Davis had an excellent opportunity to moralize on the immutable fact that the ruler of a country must bear the responsibility for failure, no matter where lies the actual fault. He had not committed any great errors of commission in the disastrous summer that wrecked the Confederacy. So far from interfering with the commanders in the field, he had given them wide discretion.

He had concurred in Lee's invasion of the North against his own judgment—a pledge of confidence not to be surpassed. He had intrusted Johnston with large powers, even if Johnston had not seen fit to use them. That was not the President's fault. It is true that he had kept Bragg in command, but he had done so partly because of Johnston's support of that officer. In spite of his policy of noninterference with the generals, which had called for great self-control and even a measure of self-abnegation, disaster had been the portion of the Southern arms both in the East and the West. The cause that seemed so promising in May was withered in November like the flowers of May.

The catastrophe had not occurred through any positive fault of the President's. It was due to the inability of the Confederate leaders to read their problem aright, and Davis's inability in this respect was no greater than that of the generals. Disaster came because of two things—divided command and lack of coöperation. It would have been better, indeed, for Davis to have kept in his own hands the direction of all the armies than to have adopted the system actually employed, or rather the want of system. A mediocre strategic scheme calling for the coöperation of all the armies and directed by a single mind would have been superior to the isolated movements of the armies in 1863 under several commanders. Lee and Johnston might have conducted campaigns in different continents so far as any common action was concerned; they do not seem to have dreamed of coördination. Seddon did, but he was overruled. The result of the control of several men was that the South in 1863 was actually invading the enemy's country in the East while unable to defend itself in the West.

Jefferson Davis, who understood the strategic situation pretty well, made the mistake of allowing himself to be persuaded by Lee into invading Pennsylvania. Lee's audacity here ran away with him because Lee was not thinking of the West; he was a general who never remained on the defensive except by the exercise of great self-control. His strategy was essentially the offensive-defensive. Davis had interfered with Lee's plans at the time of the battle of Fredericksburg, but he now let Lee have his way under infinitely graver circumstances. Yet he could not indorse the invasion of the North heartily, and his lukewarmness had important consequences.

When Davis, at the cabinet meeting in May, finally decided to send Lee across the Potomac, thus definitely taking the offensive, he should have made a decision without reservations. He should have counted the cost of the offensive and bent every nerve to make the new strategic policy successful. Vicksburg should have been counted lost and the whole country should have been stripped of troops in order to give Lee a large army. When the weaker side takes the offensive, it should strike with its utmost strength because it must act quickly. Lee's army was far too small for invasion; if he had declined battle at Gettysburg, as Longstreet urged, he would soon have been hopelessly outnumbered and forced to retreat. Lee knew that perfectly well, and that is why he fought at Gettysburg.

Jefferson Davis, however, was essentially a defensive soldier: he was naturally overcautious. He could not bring himself to put all of his eggs in one basket. Consequently he let Lee go to Pennsylvania with an insufficient force, hoping to be able to maintain the defense in the rest of the country while taking the offensive in the Northeast. Com-

bining his old defensive system with the new offensive, he still kept garrisons and forces at various points instead of giving Lee everything. Charleston and Mobile should have been stripped, and Lee should have had 100,000 men instead of 65,000. With the larger force, Lee would either have refused to fight at Gettysburg or would have overwhelmed Meade by weight of numbers. He would not have been forced to fight immediately and at a disadvantage, the penalty of his numerical weakness. And, again, if he had won at Gettysburg, the victory would probably have been decisive. On the other hand, if he had met defeat at the head of a larger army, the war would have ended sooner. But the end would have been only what it was anyway, after a longer period. Since the terrible risks of the offensive were taken, they should have been accepted in entirety. An effort should have been made to capture Washington and end the war at a blow. But Davis would not do this.

Davis's cardinal error was in accepting Lee's plan without a conviction of its value. He would have done much better not to sanction it. He would have done better to remain on the defensive in the East and to shift Longstreet to the West—in case Lee could not have been induced to go—in May, 1863, instead of in September. Nothing decisive would probably have occurred; but if Lee were not weakened too much he would have been able to conduct a campaign in Virginia while Bragg and Longstreet attacked Rosecrans or Johnston and Longstreet rescued Pemberton. Vicksburg would have fallen, but without great loss. Such a campaign, of course, would have been a small affair in comparison with a general concentration of the Southern forces under Lee against Grant; but

it would have minimized the loss and made recovery possible.

As it was, Davis allowed Lee to dictate the strategy in the East while the great general did not have the ordering of the forces elsewhere to make the strategy effective. Control was divided between Davis and Lee, when either one or the other should have been in supreme command. If Davis had directed the war according to his own ideas, Pennsylvania would not have been invaded. If Lee had been commander in chief, he would have strengthened his army sufficiently to increase the chance of success in the invasion. But neither Davis nor Lee ordered things wholly, and so the offensive was undertaken without sufficient means for decisive victory. Thus the insufficient and ill-timed offensive in the East and the insufficient and badly-handled defensive in the West ended in a coincident disaster that brought on the downfall of the Confederacy, which, at the time of the battle of Chancellorsville, seemed on the way to victory. Divided command and lack of coöperation did their accustomed work.

Missionary Ridge did not immediately unseat Bragg. The discredited commander, after his retreat to Dalton, actually seems to have thought that he could wheedle Davis into continuing him at the head of the army. "Let us concentrate our available men," he wrote the President, "unite them with this gallant little army . . . and with our greatest and best leader at the head, yourself, if practicable, march the whole upon the enemy and crush him in his power and glory." [1]

But Davis, partial as he was to Bragg, knew that the latter had to go. The matter was brought up in the cabinet,

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 52, Part II, Supplement, 567.

which, for once ignoring the President's predilections, voted for Bragg's removal.[1] The general relieved an unpleasant situation by tending his resignation, which was immediately accepted. Thus Jefferson Davis bowed to the inevitable.

He managed, however, to make the sacrifice in such a manner as to outrage public sentiment afresh. His pride was fully aroused by now and he was beginning to show that fatal obstinacy for which he has been too widely famed, for earlier in the war it did not appear. He was resolved that Bragg should not be disgraced in his removal. Consequently, the general was ordered to Richmond and made military adviser, the post which Lee had held in 1862. The country knew what this meant, that Bragg would enjoy the President's favor more than ever, even if he could not command an army. He would have great weight in dictating the military policy. At once, Davis's enemies were up in arms, so that any benefit that might have accrued from Bragg's removal was lost. The Richmond *Examiner,* which now assailed the administration continually, sarcastically voiced the current opinion of Bragg's new appointment: "From Lookout Mountain, a step to the highest honor and power is natural and inevitable." There was much truth in the bitter jest: Bragg was, indeed, to have much power in the events that preceded the downfall of the Confederacy.

Davis's fondness for Bragg has been often mentioned in connection with his extreme partiality for West Pointers. He has been blamed too much in this latter particular. It should be noted that nearly all of the officers of great distinction on both sides were graduates of West Point. Halleck, Grant, Sherman, McClellan, Meade, Hooker, Buell, Rosecrans, Thomas, Sheridan, Hancock, Warren—all were

[1] Jones, 2, 106.

West Pointers. More nongraduates rose to fame in the Confederate service than in the Union. Likewise, many incompetent West Pointers were appointed to high command on both sides. When the war ended, the unprofessional soldiers in the Confederate armies were rapidly pushing to the front and they would largely have superseded the West Pointers if the war had lasted two years longer.

Jefferson Davis's preference for trained men was perfectly right. He appointed a few politicians to high rank, and nearly all of them disappointed him. The successes of the Southern forces were largely due to the professional soldiers who commanded them. Yet it would have been far better if Davis had recognized the fact that training is much less important in the case of soldiers than aptitude for war: soldiers are always born, never made. The number of first-rate West Pointers in the Southern service was small: one reason why Bragg was kept was that soldiers capable of commanding armies were so few. But Jefferson Davis did not look far enough for talent. After two years of bitter fighting, a number of officers, developed in the school of actual war, were coming to the front. Such men as Forrest, Cleburne and Walthall were forcing recognition by their feats of arms; they were practical soldiers of great ability, and Forrest has never been surpassed as a cavalry general. Davis did promote these officers to important places, but he seems to have thought that no one but a West Point graduate was fit to command an army. As a matter of fact, either Forrest or Cleburne was much fitter to head an army than Bragg for the one reason, if no other, that they were strong and resolute men while Bragg was weak and hesitating. It is a pity that the President did not rise above professional prejudice and advance these

excellent soldiers to still higher posts. The service would have gained by their elevation. But he continued to reserve army leadership for professional soldiers, with disastrous consequences.

On Bragg's removal, the command of the army of Tennessee passed automatically to Hardee, the senior corps commander. Hardee was a good though not brilliant soldier who shrank from responsibility. He requested to be relieved, and Johnston was asked to take the position. Beauregard had been once more considered and again passed over. This time Johnston consented. He was highly popular with officers and men, and his appointment was hailed with delight.

Davis gave Johnston the command only with great reluctance, for he had completely lost confidence in that officer in the Vicksburg campaign. He had attempted to induce Lee to go West and temporarily take charge of the battered army of Tennessee.[1] The idea was a good one, for Lee's presence in the West at the beginning of 1864 would have been most inspiring. Lee, however, who had no wish to enlarge the circle of his already great duties, refused with a touch of asperity. Absorbed continually with the pressing problem of finding food for his own army, he expected the government to look out for the other forces. The government was no longer able to do this, as Davis practically admitted when he appealed to Lee. It was a very significant move on his part. It shows that he was willing for Lee to become commander in chief in fact if not in name. The pity is that he sought to do this informally, nominally remaining commander himself. If he had requested Congress to make Lee the head of all the armies, the nation

[1] *Lee's Dispatches* (Freeman), 131.

would have been delighted. But Jefferson Davis would have endured anything rather than confess his military failure and his abdication of war direction. Lee's refusal to go West left him no alternative, as he saw it, but to continue the ordering of forces for whom no satisfactory leader could be found. Johnston was in command in the West, but the President distrusted him and Bragg had come to hate him. Again the stage was set for tragedy.

Johnston and Davis had now nearly reached the status of personal enemies. The fault was at least as much Johnston's as Davis's. Johnston had been worse than tactless; he had openly and harshly criticized the President, putting all the blame for the Western disaster of 1863 on him. He himself, of course, was not at all culpable. Recrimination was the foremost Confederate habit. Davis felt the injustice of being saddled with the responsibility for the fall of Vicksburg, the more that the country sided with Johnston because Johnston was popular and Davis unpopular. Lee, in his magnificent magnanimity, had assumed the full blame of Gettysburg; his report spoke only of the glorious deeds of his men. But such an example is hard to follow, and the Confederate generals, harassed by failure, were merely human in giving way to the desire to shift the blame to others. The hostility between Davis and Johnston, which later involved Bragg, assumed political importance as well as military significance: it was, in reality, the issue in politics in 1864. It led to the broadening of the division between President and nation which had arisen at the time of the battle of Chickamauga, and it resulted in the fall of the Confederacy at an earlier date than would otherwise have been the case. In the end, the nation repudiated the President.

The political storm which broke as soon as it was known that Missionary Ridge was a great disaster and which was reflected by the cabinet vote for the removal of Bragg took on larger proportions when Congress met, on December 7, 1863. It assembled under the most disheartening circumstances. The members came to Richmond from a country depressed and malcontent in every section. Some of them belonged to territory already occupied by the Union troops and lost to the South. With but few exceptions, they came with feelings of savage animosity against the administration, which they blamed for the disasters of the year. They came prepared to attack the executive in any way short of an actual breach between the legislative and executive branches. They found themselves in a crowded city of starving refugees—despondency, poverty, despair on every side.

Jefferson Davis had never commanded the affection of Congress; he had never even had the confidence of the Senate. He had expended little time in winning the politicians to his side. He issued his orders and he so overawed Congress that his orders had been obeyed, though not without much bickering. His power over the congressmen was that of a strong nature over average men. To continue such an influence, however, the continuance of success was necessary; for, in the absence of personal popularity or of anything in the nature of a political machine, built on the use of patronage, a revolt was certain in the event of misfortune. Congress reflected public opinion: in 1861 and 1862, it had felt that there was something of greatness about Davis; but in December, 1863, after Gettysburg, Vicksburg and Missionary Ridge, it completely ceased to believe in him. The jackals turned on the sick lion.

The attack on the President began in the House of Rep-

resentatives. Henry S. Foote of Tennessee, once of Mississippi, whose lifelong antagonism for Jefferson Davis reminds one of Borgo's hatred of Napoleon, at the very opening of the session poured out a scorching denunciation of the head of the government as the fountain of the country's woes. He declared that incompetent men in high military positions had led to defeat and would lead to still further disaster. Since Bragg was no longer in a definite official position, Foote assailed the man who, next to Bragg, was looked on as the especial favorite—Commissary-General Northrop. At intervals of several days, Foote continued his attacks until the President's supporters rallied to his defense.

As the year 1863 closed, with Davis's popularity gone, he realized that something should be done to soothe the people. In spite of all his labors and anxieties, he held a public reception at the "White House" on New Year's Day of 1864, and another one some weeks later. At these functions he marvelously unbent. His cold courtesy was put aside for a warm handshake and a cordial, "I am very glad to see you here to-night." He even talked at some length with quite obscure guests and charmed every one, for he could be pleasing when he worked himself up to the point of throwing off his habitual nervous depression.

The public receptions had little effect on Congress or even on the hungry swarm of refugees and government clerks. Foote offered a resolution calling for Northrop's removal, and, though it was defeated, the audacious proposal showed how the President's enemies had strengthened since the last meeting of Congress.

The attitude of the Senate was even more ominous, for it became apparent that the President would not be able to

command a majority in that body much longer. On January 4, the Senate passed resolutions complimenting Lee. This seems innocent enough on its face, for such resolutions were passed in the case of other officers, but in this particular instance the resolutions marked the first move in a long game for superseding Davis with Lee. The President now had an admirable opportunity to confound his enemies and critics, who looked on him as alone responsible for the defeats of 1863. If he had recommended Congress to make Lee commander in chief, the responsibility for the further conduct of the war would have rested with the great general, not the head of the nation. Lee would have won glory, but he would also have incurred the blame for failure. As it was, Jefferson Davis received no recognition for the part he had played in the successes of the army while he bore the responsibility for disaster, which, as we have seen, was no more attributable to him than to others.

The appointment of Lee as generalissimo was Davis's best chance. It would have been a highly politic move and, at the same time, one actually in accord with his own inclinations. Bragg had definitely failed and was utterly discredited; the President did not trust Johnston and was deeply worried about the West; he would have been glad to turn over the control of the Western army and the settlement of the Western problem to Lee. He was not blindly self-confident, as has been so often asserted. He frequently did not know what to do and hesitated for a long period over a course of action, as, for instance, the retention or removal of Bragg. He was exceedingly jealous of encroachments on his authority, but he constantly sought advice. In fact, it seems probable that he did little except on the advice of trusted councilors. He had leaned on Lee and

Seddon; for the rest of the war he was to depend on Bragg. But he had prided himself on performing the functions of a war President—of being the actual commander in chief—and he would have gone to the stake before he would voluntarily have relinquished authority. So he continued to tinker at the Western problem until the breakdown came. What he really wished was for Lee to become commander in chief in fact, though not in name. Lee, however, would not accept an indefinite command of the other armies; probably he did not wish to be generalissimo on any terms. His refusal forced Davis back on his own resources.

Congress concentrated its attack on Northrop. Senator Orr of South Carolina sought, in a private interview, to induce Davis to get rid of the target of criticism. Northrop was intensely unpopular because of the oppressive acts of his agents in impressing food. But Davis realized that food could not be obtained except by taking it from an unwilling populace, and he supported Northrop. Again, he bitterly resented criticism of his action in retaining a hated subordinate; he had learned nothing from his championship of Bragg. He would have done much better to remove the commissary-general and let the country see that Northrop's successor would necessarily follow Northrop's methods.

The judiciary committee of the Senate presently struck at the cabinet, now highly unpopular. It reported a bill requiring the vacating of cabinet offices at the end of two years. The ministers whose heads were desired were Benjamin, Memminger and Mallory, and afterward Seddon. The bill did not pass; it was undoubtedly unconstitutional, an attempt to negative the President's authority. The attack on the cabinet was only temporarily defeated: it was later renewed and was partially successful; Memmin-

ger and Seddon resigned and Benjamin and Mallory remained.

The Senate committee on military affairs now took a hand. It actually declared that Quartermaster-General Myers, who had been removed from his position in August, 1863, was still in office at the end of January, 1864. As Lawton, his successor, had not been confirmed by the Senate, the committee did not recognize him as Quartermaster-General, though he was exercising control over his department. This was an almost ludicrous measure of resistance to the President. Myers was not more competent than Northrop, and there was no other reason for this championship of his cause than that he had been deposed by Davis while Northrop was supported.

Yet in spite of the growing opposition to the President and of the tendency to limit his power, Congress passed a new conscription bill, urged by Davis, that greatly enlarged the scope of the draft. Congress saw that an increase of the army was imperative. This was the proper hour for the introduction of negroes in the service—a measure that would have postponed the end of the war. Davis, however, thought that victory might be won without resort to so desperate an expedient. He realized the crisis that was at hand, yet not fully. He dreaded a drastic action, certain to arouse a storm and not unlikely to overthrow the government. Thus, when Patrick Cleburne, the brilliant corps commander of the Western army, chose this time to bring forward a plan for the enlistment of the blacks in the army, he met with a severe rebuke. The government decided to attempt to find enough white men to fill the depleted ranks.

In the winter of 1864, the conscription officers, fortified by the new law, worked with great industry and success.

The draft service maintained two bureaus: one for Tennessee, Mississippi and Alabama, under General Pillow; the other for the East under Colonel Preston. In December, 1863, the Confederate armies, East and West, were worn to the bone. During the late winter, the conscript officers pursued draft evaders through all the backwoods and mountain sections of the South, securing thousands of recruits. They seized men everywhere, and anybody. They even laid hands on Postmaster-General Reagan in the streets of Richmond. Often they worked at the risk of their lives, for the country was full of armed deserters who would not be forced back in service under any circumstances. The bulk of the new levies were boys sixteen and eighteen years old. Many more men would have been caught in the dragnet but for the exemptions granted by the national and state governments and the action of some of the state courts in taking men away from the draft officers. In Georgia, thousands of men were kept out of the Confederate army for home defense in the militia. In other states, the militia likewise took from active field service many able-bodied men.

The government's great difficulty was the waning man power. It is true that the food shortage was acute and that Lee was led to invade Pennsylvania by the hope of securing provisions, yet by the spring of 1864 the food problem had been partly solved and there were more rations in the supply depots than for some time before. The reason why the armies were constantly on the verge of starvation was bad transportation, which was almost paralyzing by the beginning of 1864. Yet transportation might have been greatly improved by energetic measures: that was not an insuperable difficulty. As for arms and munitions, the Confederacy had never been so well supplied as at the opening

of the campaign of 1864. In 1861 and 1862, there had been an actual shortage of arms and in 1863 of ammunition: Lee's men had been forced to fire scrap iron from their guns at Gettysburg. But now the government had large chemical and munitions plants, under the management of eminent experts, and improved shells and good powder were being made. Small arms were manufactured in quantities, as well as excellent field pieces and siege artillery of the largest bores. But soldiers could not be secured in sufficient numbers to face the armies of the North. The recruits were immature boys and there were not enough of them. It is true that the Union was also hard pressed to find men, but its resources were vastly greater than those of the Confederacy.

The South's one existing source of supply—the blacks—was not touched. As the Union was enlisting many regiments of negroes, the Confederacy now faced the problem of having them fight for or against it. A sentiment small but growing favored their enrollment in the army. As early as 1862, at a secret conference of Bragg's generals, Cleburne and Breckinridge declared for the enlistment of slaves. A recommendation was sent to the government, which considered it in cabinet session and tabled it. At this time the hopes of the South were high and negroes did not seem needed.

The losses of 1863 inevitably revived the topic: there was an acute shortage of cannon food. Yet to fill the army with blacks was nothing less than a revolution. It must have meant the doom of slavery, for the negroes could not be expected to risk their lives as bondmen. It would have awakened intense opposition and Stephens would have outdone himself in denunciations of the government. Still

in 1864 the employment of negroes in the army was possible, because the South was no longer fighting for states' rights but for national independence, and the more intelligent part of the populace would have made any sacrifices to attain it. The opposition to negro soldiers would have come far less from slaveholders than from the rank and file of the army, the non-slaveholders. The Southern masses supported the Confederate government partly from a knowledge that the Confederacy stood squarely for white rule, for the principle of racial domination. If, then, the government had put the blacks on a parity with the white private soldiers, by enlisting them under the colors, a protest would have followed that might have swept the government out of power. Beyond a doubt, Jefferson Davis knew this and feared it.

Yet the need of soldiers was so great in the early months of 1864 that he would have done well to study the matter. The presence of 200,000 new troops in the army at this time would have immensely altered the situation. Garrisons might have been replaced by these negro soldiers and Lee's army could have been increased to 100,000 men: he would have met Grant on almost equal terms. Likewise, the Western army would have been raised to the same size, and Sherman's march would have been impossible. The military advantages would seem to have outweighed the risk of revolution. It was a choice of risks, anyway, and often what seems the least risk is the greatest.

Cleburne, clearly seeing the need, took the initiative in approaching the government. A meeting of the corps and division commanders of Johnston's army was held on the first of January, and Cleburne presented his proposal. Most of the officers present favored it, though Johnston himself

expressed no opinion. One or two, however, protested to the government, and the government sent word to Johnston not to let news of the meeting get out. Davis seems to have been in some trepidation. Johnston, finding the government adverse, declared himself to be opposed, and nothing more was heard of a plan which might have accomplished much. A year later Davis gave the scheme his approval, but that was a year too late.

The whole matter illustrates one of Jefferson Davis's cardinal defects as a revolutionary leader: he was too much inclined to take the course of immediate safety. Revolution is, in its nature, a gamble, and great risks must be run. Washington continually took great risks, and because he did he succeeded in the end. If he had remained on the passive defensive he would have lost. Lee took great risks, and because he took them he nearly carried the cause to success. Jefferson Davis, however, contrary to the received opinion, was a man of slow and cautious disposition. So far from being precipitate, he was not precipitate enough. His natural tendency was to temporize in the hope that something would "turn up." He waited in the autumn of 1861 with disastrous results. He failed to act with great energy in the early winter of 1862, dreaming of foreign intervention. But he could act when absolutely necessary—act with swiftness and resolution—and his quick action in 1862 had a good deal to do with saving the Confederacy for the time. Now, however, he put off the evil day, trusting that it would never come. He would not take the risk of enlisting negroes, and a few months later he took an infinitely greater risk. His caution, his conservatism, his disinclination to act radically hastened the end of the Confederacy and cost it its last chance.

Cleburne's project was dismissed with these words from Davis: "Deeming it to be injurious to the public service that such a subject should be mooted, or even known to be entertained by persons possessed of the confidence and respect of the people, I have concluded that the best policy under the circumstances will be to avoid all publicity." [1] Johnston replied that the idea was Cleburne's alone. We may add: let the credit be Cleburne's alone. He alone had the insight to see and the courage to urge a measure which, if adopted early enough, might have saved the country.

As a matter of fact, Jefferson Davis, when he hushed up Cleburne's proposal, was under the compulsion of a new military idea, an idea far rasher than Cleburne's though not revolutionary. He had decided on an offensive campaign in the West. This decision was the first fruit of Bragg's influence. The evil genius of the Confederacy was now in Richmond, in greater favor than ever. It was Bragg's proposal that Johnston should make an offensive campaign. Davis quickly agreed to so agreeable a plan, and even Lee seems to have thought that it was possible. Davis had telegraphed Bragg at the end of January to come to Richmond, adding, "I want to confer with you." [2] Bragg went, and the month of February, 1864, was spent in working out a plan for a campaign in Tennessee in the spring.

Johnston was told what was expected of him. He did not like it, but Davis offered to enlarge his army if he would make the effort. Longstreet, who was still in Tennessee and who was to join Johnston as the latter advanced, also disapproved the plan. He wrote Johnston that if the

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 52, Part II, Supplement, 596.
[2] *O. R.*, Series I, 52, Part II, Supplement, 607.

Confederate army moved north its communications would be in great danger of being cut.

These practical soldiers had every reason to shy from a scheme so impossible as a Confederate offensive in the West in 1864. Bragg had been unable to maintain himself at Chattanooga in 1863 when not greatly outnumbered by the enemy. Now, after Missionary Ridge and the complete defeat of the Western army, he was demanding that Johnston, with the army that had been routed, should invade Tennessee in the face of the victorious army, larger and stronger than before and under the command of one of the best of Union generals, Sherman. The principal strategic points in Tennessee were forts held by strong garrisons. The Confederates must advance northward, leaving these forts behind them or on their flanks as a constant menace. What, if any, rational hope of success Bragg entertained it is difficult to say, but it is certain that he misrepresented to Davis the conditions in the West, and largely through his misrepresentations he induced the President to favor his desperate scheme.

The truth is that Jefferson Davis was undergoing a transformation that comes to many prudent, conservative men whose prudence and conservatism fail to save them from disaster—he was becoming a gambler. He knew now that nothing was to be expected from Europe, that the South must work out its salvation unaided. He also realized that the condition of affairs was desperate and that something had to be done. He had taken risks at Chickamauga and had nearly saved Tennessee. He was prepared to take greater risks in the hope that a victory would change the whole aspect of the war.

But when a man whose nature is opposed to taking risks

turns gambler he is likely to go too far. His judgment is likely to be overborne by the frenzy of desperation; he is likely to plunge ahead, defying the chances. We see this tendency in men who seek to recoup themselves for losses by speculating in the stock market. They usually only damn themselves the deeper. It was so with Jefferson Davis. His cautious defensive had broken down; everywhere the enemy were pressing forward, the Confederates falling back. He felt that some action of a decisive nature was imperative, and Bragg was ever at his side telling him that the thing that would save the country was an offensive campaign in the West. Bragg himself had not saved the West, but that was another matter. He would have done so, he explained, but for his incapable subordinates and his lack of troops. He now urged the concentration of all available troops in the Western army and a forward movement.

It was probable that Bragg was moved by two motives: he naturally preferred the offensive, though incapable of executing offensive movements himself. In the second place, he had come to dislike Johnston intensely; and if Johnston declined to take the offensive the new commander would be finally discredited and might be removed. In fact, there is every reason to believe that Johnston's replacement by Hood in July, 1864, was a measure toward which Bragg moved from the very moment he arrived in Richmond and became the President's military adviser. It was the culmination of a carefully worked out plot.

Bragg sent Johnston an outline of the plan of the offensive campaign. Johnston replied but did not commit himself. He wanted more troops for an aggressive movement. Bragg telegraphed him on March 21: "Your dispatch does not indicate an acceptance of the plan proposed. The troops

can only be drawn from other points for an advance. Upon your decision on that point further action must depend." [1] Bragg was skillfully maneuvering Johnston into a position where he would be made to appear either timid or a shirker.

A forward movement into Tennessee, with Longstreet added to Johnston's force, would have resulted in a battle with Sherman in which the Confederates might have had a chance to win. But Lee was calling for Longstreet to return to Virginia, and without Longstreet the offensive campaign was wholly impossible.

John B. Hood, late of Lee's army but who had been recently made a lieutenant general and given command of a corps in Johnston's army, largely because he was Bragg's protégé and in full sympathy with his plans, wrote from the West on March 17, declaring that the troops were "eager for the fray." He urged the junction of Polk's and other troops in the West with the army of Tennessee, which would be raised to 60,000 men, and then the union with Longstreet in Tennessee, which he fancied would increase the army to 90,000 men.

Longstreet, however, had only 10,000 men, and he presently marched away to join Lee in Virginia. This should have put an end to the project of a Western invasion. But Bragg refused to abandon a scheme that had rooted itself in his flighty mind and that might result in Johnston's fall. Davis was foolish enough to continue to put confidence in Bragg, even after the latter had given this plain evidence of aberration. In the middle of April, an official in Richmond informed Johnston that he could not have Longstreet, but added: "Can I tell the President you will assume the

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 52, Part II, Supplement, 664.

offensive with 15,000 additional troops? It is important that I receive your reply immediately." [1]

Johnston did not refuse outright but he temporized, making conditions. The government ordered Polk's command in Mississippi and some other troops to join him, somewhat increasing his army but still leaving him greatly inferior to Sherman. Bragg now wrote to Johnston that his conditions had been fulfilled, though the army of Tennessee was not strong. A month later, when the troops had joined Johnston and no more seemed available, Bragg sent him word: "Every disposable man now sent, and from the high condition in which your army is reported we rely on brilliant success." [2]

Bragg had now made out his case with the President. He had represented the Western army as being large enough and in good enough condition to make a forward movement into Tennessee. If the army did not advance, it would be Johnston's fault. In that case, Johnston, whose great popularity galled the unpopular Bragg almost beyond endurance, would have to make way for Bragg's appointee. The military adviser had put the commander of the army of Tennessee in a position from which he could not extricate himself save by some action of a rash and dangerous nature, and Bragg knew that Johnston would not act in that fashion. It is more than probable that he counted on Johnston's speedy resignation. He already had his own candidate for the place.

By this time Bragg was completely in the ascendant at Richmond. He did not attempt to interfere with Lee, who managed his own army to suit himself, but everything else

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 52, Part II, Supplement, 657.
[2] *O. R.*, Series I, 52, Part II, Supplement, 671.

came under his control. He replaced Seddon in Davis's confidence and largely replaced Seddon as Secretary of War, writing to the various army leaders much as the head of a general staff might do. Jefferson Davis was more under his influence than he had ever been under that of Benjamin, Lee or Seddon. Bragg commanded his unlimited confidence.

The hold gained by the discredited general may well seem singular. He had few friends anywhere, being disliked by soldiers, detested by politicians, derided by the country. Yet, total failure that he was, he exercised a wider influence over the strong mind of Jefferson Davis than any other man. A year before the President had not believed in him as much as he did now after a year darkened by almost irretrievable disaster. But Bragg was continually with Davis and he was a very insinuating man; he talked authoritatively on military affairs, being as admirable a general on paper as he was poor in the field. He completely convinced Davis of the soundness of his deductions, partly, no doubt, because Davis wished to be convinced. Davis wished to believe that the Confederacy was still strong enough for a forward movement; he did not like to face the reality that it was fast weakening toward its end.

Besides, Bragg flattered him. Jefferson Davis had, in an excessive degree, the weaknesses of sensitiveness. Tortured with self-doubts and melancholy, he was peculiarly open to the seductions of flattery. In Davis's case the temptation was doubly great at this time because he was almost overborne by the labors and responsibility of his position. He knew that his popularity was gone and he felt that the cause was failing. He was bitterly hurt by the attacks of press and politicians. Bragg still talked confidently of the future,

still deferred to him, still credited him with great military talent. His devotion to Bragg became unbounded.

Bragg did not establish himself in Richmond without opposition. The public did not want him in an official capacity. When a bill was introduced in the Senate to give him the rank and pay of a commanding general, Orr and Wigfall attacked it bitterly. The Richmond newspapers poured ridicule on him, and the city was full of absurd rumors of his extravagant acts. About the same time, Foote in the House of Representatives assailed Memminger and proposed to make Lee dictator. The Senate finally gave Bragg his pay as general, but Memminger was so moved by the assaults on him that he resigned, on June 20, 1864. His going was greeted with joy, but the financial condition of the Confederacy was too desperate now to be remedied by the greatest money juggler that ever lived. Davis had sustained Memminger through more than three years of incessant criticism, and the Secretary's passing marked the first distinct victory of the congressional opposition.

Meanwhile the campaign had opened with an advance of Sherman's army. It was not only evident that the offensive in the West was a dream but it was highly doubtful that the Confederacy would hold its own on the defensive. Bragg had harped for three months on the theme that the Confederates must concentrate at the beginning of the campaign and take the initiative before the Union forces could unite to crush them. Theoretically, this sounded well enough; but the Union facilities for concentration were now so much better than those of the South that an advance into Tennessee would have been followed by a quick junction of the Northern forces by means of the railroads, which in Tennessee had been extensively repaired and were in good running order.

Bragg's plan had been the hopeless vision of a man who had done little on the offensive himself under far more favorable circumstances. He demanded of Johnston what he himself would never have thought of attempting. Sherman's forward movement into Georgia at once dispelled the dream. Yet this still influenced the mind of Jefferson Davis, in that it led him to believe that Johnston had been at fault in not assuming the offensive and in letting Sherman take the initiative. Jefferson Davis was unacquainted with the grim realities of the situation.

XII

THE MILITARY GAMBLE

IN the spring of 1864 the Union Government began a concerted series of military movements intended to complete the work of the year before and bring about the overthrow of the Confederacy by autumn. The Union was far stronger than at the beginning of the war. Its remarkable government had succeeded in establishing a nation out of the chaos of factions existing in 1861 and in creating a great army and a great navy. It had been accused of trampling on the Constitution, and, no doubt, with truth, for the Constitution hampered a vigorous government in an emergency. It represented the triumphant industrial democracy, just as the Confederate government did not represent the planter class. It was an enormous energy guided by shrewdness, a junto of geniuses who did not love each other but who worked together for a common object. Seward, that master of craft, had the hardest task of all, for he had to beguile and subsidize Europe into permitting the continuance of a doubtfully legal blockade that was contrary to its interests and to persuade it not to sanction a separation of the republic vastly to its advantage. His success stamps him as a great diplomat. Chase, too, had shown rare judgment in juggling the finances of a distracted country on the verge of bankruptcy, with its business temporarily ruined. In spite of its oppressive load of debt, the credit of the government

was good. Stanton, as war minister, had put forth immense efforts, raising huge numbers of troops and finding generals to lead them to victory. Lincoln, the tyro of 1861, had developed into a wonderful ruler. He drove his team of Titans well: unlike a small man, he gave them a free rein and did not attempt to conduct their departments for them; he soothed politicians, united factions and grew in the popular imagination with the passing months. When at last a general of the first order appeared in Grant, the President made him commander of all the armies and permitted him to win the war in his own way. In the rare combination of practical wisdom, undaunted courage, and noble aspiration, Lincoln stands as one of the great figures of history. Against his government of business men and masterly politicians were contrasted the councilors of Davis, who did not measure up to their opponents.

Grant was an originator of great plans. He devised the second American essay in grand strategy. By the first, Washington had formed a combination of his army at New York with the French fleet in the West Indies which won Yorktown and secured independence. Grant now began to put in operation a plan for simultaneously overwhelming the army of Tennessee and defeating and driving from Richmond the army of Virginia. If these two main Confederate forces were destroyed, the subjugation of the country would follow. But it is easy to dream of grand strategy, hard to carry it out. Grant, by his strong practical sense and his powerful will, did carry out his plan and thereby brought the war to an end. But for it the South might have resisted a year or two longer, with a chance of winning in the end.

The enormous gain of Grant's system of coördinating the movements of the main Union armies in the East and West

was not immediately evident, for Grant found a formidable obstacle in his path. Lee was now at his ripe best, and there have been few better commanders of a single army. He had always succeeded except at Gettysburg, and he had failed there because he had used tactics practicable for Jackson but not for Jackson's successors. Taught by that failure, Lee adapted his methods to his means and rose to his greatest heights in the Wilderness.

In May, 1864, Grant crossed the Rappahannock into a dense jungle of pines and small oaks that stood across his line of march to the south. He was trying the overland route to Richmond, but his main object was to defeat Lee's indomitable army, which he hoped to fight in the open country. That army had become the single great obstacle in the path of Union victory: the primary objective of the Mississippi had been gained; the secondary objective, Virginia, was now the first. For this reason Grant had left the West, where Sherman succeeded him, and had come to Virginia to overthrow Lee. Since Gettysburg the North had underrated Lee, and government and people alike anticipated that the general who had won such triumphs in the West would soon end the war.

The expected did not happen. Grant's army of 120,000 men was assailed in the jungle by Lee, with the 60,000 men he mustered. The difference in numbers hardly measures the disadvantages under which Lee labored. The Union army was not only twice as large as his, with twice as many pieces of artillery and equipped according to the latest ideas of military science, but the Union rank and file were now better than his own: the superiority of the Confederate infantry was about gone. Lee had lost thousands of his veterans in battle and by desertion and their places were

filled by raw recruits, for the most part immature boys who remind one of Napoleon's levies in 1814. These valiant children did marvelously well, but they were hardly equal, individually, to the maturer men in the Northern ranks.

Lee's decision to fight in the thicket was a stroke of genius, because he thereby rendered ineffective the stronger Union artillery. He also counted on the possibility of surprise. Indeed, he so skillfully neutralized the advantages of the Union army that he very nearly won a great victory. The battle of the Wilderness raged for two days, May 5 and 6, 1864. In that frightful conflict in the bush, that wholesale assassination in the dark, where men fought breast to breast and yet unseeing and unseen and the wounded roasted in the flaming brush, Lee had much the better of it. On the second day the Union army was hurled back with terrific slaughter, outflanked and weakening, when Longstreet, who was in immediate command, was wounded by the fire of his own men and the hard-pressed Northerners gained a respite to entrench themselves. The victory remained uncompleted.

Grant now attempted to move around Lee to the east, but was checkmated and repulsed in an even more awful struggle at Spotsylvania, where for once, in literal fact, the dead lay in piles and the trenches were muddy with blood. Again and again he attempted to flank Lee, only to fail each time. Finally at Cold Harbor, on the old battlefield of the Seven Days, the Union commander, weary of attempting to outmaneuver Lee, made a frontal assault on the Confederate trenches which failed with frightful butchery.

The attempt to crush Lee and bring the war to an end speedily had completely miscarried. In this struggle, the most terrible ever fought on American soil, in which the two armies together lost nearly 100,000 men, Grant had put

forth his utmost exertions in vain. At the cost of some 65,000 of his troops he had approached Richmond, but Lee was still in front, undefeated, and the Confederate morale was rising in proportion as the Union morale fell.

It was a critical moment and might have proved fatal to the Union cause had a weaker spirit been the leader of the army. But Grant was the most rugged man of action in American history. Although outgeneraled by Lee and brought to a standstill by the Southern army, he had no thought of accepting defeat so long as the government continued to send him the myriads of recruits needed to fill the gaps in his lines. It was impossible to storm Lee's trenches or to get at Richmond north of the James River, but it might be possible to cut the city's communications with the South. Grant now made his greatest move, a move that is the best evidence of his military genius and tenacity of purpose. On the morrow of his dreadful repulse at Cold Harbor, he threw his army across the James with masterly skill and advanced on Petersburg, the key of Richmond.

Petersburg was saved by Beauregard, who had come to Virginia to take a small command. He was admirable on the defensive and now foiled the Union attacks until Lee sent aid. The two main armies soon appeared before Petersburg and confronted each other behind interminable lines of earthworks that were the ancestors of those on the Aisne. The war in Virginia had now reached the stage of deadlock. It was Grant's plan to hold Lee fast at Petersburg until the Western army, under Sherman, could come up behind and envelop him. The Northern commander had given up the hope of winning the war by the immediate defeat of Lee.

So far Grant, indeed, had failed in Virginia. It was the

present failure, not the future prospect, that the Northern public saw. It fell into the deepest depression of the whole war. The campaign had been widely advertised as the *coup de grâce*. The newspapers had prophesied the end of the Confederacy with even more than customary journalistic fatuousness; the people believed that the end was surely approaching. Instead of this, Lee was as terrible as ever and the Union losses surpassed anything known before. Grant, with his great army, had not repeated Donelson and Vicksburg.

The psychology of depression is a curious study, for depression is one of the most vital factors in war as it is in ordinary life. If other things are in the remotest degree equal, the nation that bears depression best will win. For this reason it is the most important function of national leaders to blind the people to the odds against them. Makers of nations, such as William the Silent, have succeeded in this. Conversely, revolutionary movements have often failed for just the lack of this: the truth has been seen too clearly.

In the summer of 1864 both the North and the South were depressed, but the Northern depression was the more dangerous because it followed a season of prosperity. Vicksburg and Gettysburg had led the North to think that the resisting power of the South was gone, that the war was almost over. The Wilderness rudely shook this idea by showing the world that Lee was practically unbeatable in Virginia, even by the best general and the largest army of the North. Once more the North began to wonder whether the South could ever be brought to submission, and a sentiment for peace even at the price of Southern independence made itself felt.

The Southern morale had fallen low in December, 1863,

after Missionary Ridge. But as the terrible fighting in Virginia in May, 1864, continued and it was seen that Lee more than held his own, the confidence of the Southern people began to revive. The hope was reflected in commodity prices, which fell sharply in August, 1864; for instance, flour from $500 a barrel to $200. In Europe, the brightening of Confederate prospects was evident in the rise of the cotton bonds, which had fallen as low as 37 in December, 1863, but which advanced to 80 in 1864, on the news of McClellan's nomination for the presidency.[1]

Another campaign in Virginia had ended in nothing, just as had the efforts of McDowell, McClellan, Pope, Burnside, Hooker and Meade before; and in June, 1864, the war-weary and the pacifists asserted themselves as they had not done in the previous two years. It was the perilous moment of an opening presidential campaign. We might almost smile now to think that Lincoln ever doubted his reëlection; but the doubt did not seem absurd to men of his time. The government had been fighting the South for three years and had not been able to prevail: to superficial minds, always greatly in the majority, it appeared that the war might go on for many more years before victory declared itself. To many men not superficial the South seemed to have grown into a separate nation in the long period of estrangement; and they thought the recognition of the fact would be best. Still others thought that the South might be brought back into the Union by a suspension of fighting and the calling of a convention of states empowered to arrange a compromise.

It is possible, though not probable, that if November, 1864, had arrived with the Confederacy still apparently strong Lincoln might not have been reëlected. The Demo-

[1] Schwab, *The Confederate States of America*, 36.

cratic party, which favored the plan of bringing the South back to the Union by a compromise, would have appealed strongly to the thousands who were tired of the war and its increasing sacrifices. This situation, which seemed to offer some hope to the Confederacy, was watched by Jefferson Davis with close attention. Indeed, the Democratic party had come to be his main reliance for the termination of the war, for he had abandoned the dream of foreign intervention. In March, 1864, he was heard to say, "We have no friends abroad." [1]

Davis's direct interest in military operations revived as the war once more drew near Richmond. He kept in close touch with Lee and rode out daily to see him while he held the lines at Cold Harbor. Richmond was once more thrilled with alarms. These had begun in March, 1864, when Union raiders reached the outskirts of the city and Jefferson Davis in his office heard the sound of their guns. Again, in May, the Union cavalry penetrated to the outer fortifications and a skirmish took place in which the dashing Stuart fell. Davis was present at this action and prepared to take command when Stuart fell, but the raiders were driven off quickly. The President was filled with a longing for battle, for the physical joy of combat, for an excitement that would make him momentarily forget his cares and depression. He continually chafed under the restriction that kept the chief magistrate of the nation from participating in fighting. He still retained something of his faith in his military ability. He still gave Lee advice, though less and less of it, largely leaving the general to his own devices, to the management of his own command, long since known as "Lee's army."

In 1864, Jefferson Davis still hoped for success, though

[1] Jones, 2, 175.

only after the greatest privations and sacrifices. Sometimes he showed what was in his mind. Once when walking in the capitol grounds with several girls, he pointed to some small boys playing near. "Even those boys," he said, "will have their trial."

A girl asked him, "But how shall the army be fed?"

He replied, "I don't see why rats, if fat, are not as good as squirrels. Our men *did* eat mule meat at Vicksburg; but it would be an expensive luxury now." [1]

Private sorrow was added to Davis's public burdens in this terrible year of 1864. On the last day of April a sad accident occurred. The President at that time was much exhausted from worry and loss of sleep, though he insisted on keeping his office hours. His wife fell into the habit of carrying him a lunch at midday. One noontide she left her children playing as usual while she went about her daily errand. Presently, as she chatted with her husband, a terrified servant came hurrying to tell her that her little son, Joseph Emory, had fallen from a balcony to the pavement below. The child died just as the parents reached his side. Jefferson Davis was utterly prostrated for some hours. At intervals, he was heard to ejaculate, "Not mine, O Lord, but thine!" A courier came with a dispatch, but he would not read it. "I must have this day with my little child," he said. The next morning he went to work at his usual hour.

The Christian resignation with which he took this blow was in keeping with his deeply religious nature. In the ambitions of his earlier life he had found little time for formal religion, but the Civil War brought to a nature almost always somberly serious a new sense of responsibility, and

[1] Jones, 2, 175.

in 1862 Jefferson Davis joined St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Richmond. He had been born a Hard-Shell Baptist. There can be no doubt of the genuineness of his faith, and he seems to have spent much time in praying for the success of the cause in which all his hopes were engaged. In fact, he was credited with being superstitious, with leaving the outcome to Providence when he frankly did not know what to do. A famous sentence in the *Examiner* illustrates this tendency: "We find the President standing in a corner telling his beads, and relying on a miracle to save the country." [1]

Jefferson Davis, in his religiousness, was thoroughly representative of the South. One of the popular misconceptions of American history is that the old South was cavalier. It is true that there was always a cavalier element in the South, but at the time of the Civil War it was overshadowed by puritanism. The slave states formed one of the most Christian communities in the world—that is, one wherein orthodox Christianity was sincerely believed in by an overwhelming majority of the inhabitants. Perhaps nowhere in the world were there so many people who believed that dancing and theater-going were cardinal sins as in the South. Lee's army was made up of Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians; it was the most religious army since Cromwell's time. Revivals were its favorite recreation. It swarmed with preachers serving as chaplains, private soldiers and officers. The influence of religion was almost universal. Lee himself was anything but a cavalier, being a precisian and a churchwarden. Jackson was a deacon of the straitest sect. Nearly all of the other Confederate leaders were earnest church members. Some of them, like Ewell, were converted during the war. Lee's artillery chief, Pendleton, was a West

[1] May 19, 1862.

Pointer who had turned parson. Polk was a bishop. One might expect to find a cavalier spirit, if anywhere, in Stuart, the strident cavalryman with the long boots and the waving plume. No such thing. Stuart was pious and a prohibitionist. In fact, such is the monotony of Confederate virtue that one is rather relieved to run across that open and avowed sinner, Jubal A. Early, whose venerable bald head and patriarchal beard did not keep him from scandalizing the army by cursing with great force and fluency. He was the "horrible example" of the Confederate host.

Jefferson Davis had prayed in 1862; he had much more occasion to pray in 1864. For the time being Lee had stopped the Union advance in the East, but the outlook was most menacing in the West, though somewhat improved over December, 1863. The army of Tennessee had begun to better from the time Johnston took command. Recruits came in, absent soldiers trooped back to the colors, and gradually the army that had been hopelessly broken at Missionary Ridge once again became an efficient fighting force.

But it faced a much more efficient force in Sherman's army. This army put an end to Bragg's vision of a Confederate offensive by slowly and cautiously advancing southward. Johnston had no natural inclination for attack, and as Sherman had a larger army than his own and always moved behind the protection of trenches he found no opportunity to attack. Nor could he foil Sherman by standing on the defensive, for Sherman moved continually around his right flank, much after the fashion of a mole going around an obstruction. Thus Johnston was forced to retreat slowly to keep from being flanked by the Union general; he fell back from Sherman's advance skillfully and with little loss.

Jefferson Davis, however, could not understand the reason

for his retreat. For months he had heard Bragg talking of an offensive in the West; and now Johnston, instead of moving into Tennessee, was retiring into Georgia. It began to wear on his nerves. All his dislike and distrust of Johnston flared up into sudden life. He thought that Johnston was once more showing lack of enterprise, throwing away new opportunities. He detested retrograde movements under any circumstances.

Now, Johnston was a natural retreater. He had retreated from Manassas to Yorktown and from Yorktown to Richmond, and he might have continued to retreat if Lee had not insisted on battle. Davis had lost confidence in him then and had never fully regained it, just as he had lost confidence in Beauregard for retreating from Shiloh to Corinth and from Corinth to Tupelo. Although he had appointed Johnston to the Tennessee-Mississippi command, he had done so with a mental reservation. His lingering distrust of Johnston had been confirmed by the Vicksburg campaign, the unfortunate outcome of which he attributed to Johnston rather than to Pemberton. He believed that Johnston might have rescued Pemberton by a vigorous effort, that he had not done his full duty. The fact that Johnston and Beauregard, cautious souls, had never lost armies or met with serious reverses made little difference to him. He preferred commanders such as Pemberton and Bragg who stood their ground and were routed or captured to generals who saved themselves by retirements.

Johnston, at Dalton, Georgia, at the beginning of the campaign, commanded about 60,000 men against the 110,000 of Sherman. The difference between the Union and Confederate armies in the West was much more marked than in the East. Lee's victories had filled his army with a belief

in its superiority, but the army of Tennessee had been so mishandled that its confidence was lowered. The Union army was not only larger, but it was better equipped, better officered, better moraled. In fact, Sherman's army was the best seen on the Union side in the war and at this particular moment the best in the world. It was a magnificent military machine commanded by one of the greatest generals of modern times. The chances of war, therefore, altogether favored Sherman.

Nevertheless, the Confederate commander conducted a campaign that for scientific thrust and parry has seldom been equaled. Acting purely on the defensive, Johnston was all that could be desired—cool, resourceful, careful of his men, impossible to outmaneuver. The situation exactly suited his talents and brought out his great qualities. He retreated, but so skillfully that Sherman gained no advantage. The rank and file, accustomed to Bragg's blundering butcheries, reacted to a generalship that threw away no lives. Presently, the Western army began to exhibit one of the strangest of military phenomena, that of an army in a prolonged retreat giving evidence of a steadily rising morale.

There was constant skirmishing and occasionally an engagement approaching the magnitude of a battle. At Kennesaw Mountain, Sherman suffered a sharp repulse, with considerable loss. Yet he went forward slowly, outflanking Johnston from position to position. Johnston had either to retreat or assault Sherman's trenches. Very properly, he continued to fall back.

His slow and uninterrupted retreat now seriously alarmed Davis. If Georgia were occupied by the enemy the Confederacy would fall. On May 18, he telegraphed Johnston that a dispatch announcing a further retirement had been "read

with disappointment." Johnston replied, "I know that my dispatch must of necessity create the feeling you express. I have earnestly sought an opportunity to strike the enemy." [1]

By this time Johnston had wisely concluded that a battle with Sherman was out of the question and that the only way to defeat him was by strategy. Forrest had hit upon the proper method early in April, when he suggested to Johnston the advisability of throwing a large force of cavalry in Sherman's rear, in order to capture Nashville and cut the Union communications. Johnston now began to urge the government to take this step—to concentrate the cavalry in the West for the purpose of breaking Sherman's communications and forcing him to retreat. He not only asked this himself; he sought to enlist political support. In the latter part of May, Senator Henry of Georgia wrote to Seddon inquiring if it would not be a good move to send Forrest to cut the enemy's communications.

Seddon indorsed the project, but unfortunately he no longer had much influence. The request was referred to Bragg, the arbiter. Bragg announced, with pedantic vagueness, that the movement had not escaped attention and it was hoped that good results would soon be heard of. Nothing was done, however. Bragg had no intention of accepting Johnston's strategy. He patriotically thirsted for the overthrow of the enemy but malevolently desired the fall of Johnston.

As the government would not strike at Sherman's supply railway, the retreat went on, as it was inevitable that it should. Mid-June came, with the retirement steadily continuing, and Davis, who was ignorant of the realities, was

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 38, Part IV, 736.

losing all patience with Johnston. Bragg was satisfied, for he knew that Johnston must soon forfeit his command.

On June 17, the military adviser took his first open step against Johnston. All the spring he had been proclaiming that the only hope for the Confederacy was an offensive campaign before the enemy could unite his various armies. Now he sent Davis a formal note enumerating the troops at Sherman's disposal, with this commentary, "Should all these troops concentrate on the army of Tennessee, we may well apprehend disaster. As the entire available force of the Confederacy is now concentrated with the two main armies, I see no solution of the difficulty but in victory over one of the enemy's armies before the combination can be fully perfected." [1]

At this very time, Johnston was urging in dispatch after dispatch that Forrest be sent with all the cavalry in the West to break the railroad along which Sherman was advancing, the only practicable way to defeat a raid that was developing into a formidable invasion. If Sherman's communications were broken he would have to retreat or assault Johnston's trenches, with every probability of meeting with disaster. The general managed to impress his views on the leading men of Georgia; and Howell Cobb, Davis's friend, now joined in the request that Forrest's cavalry be employed in Sherman's rear.

Cobb carried some weight with the President, but unhappily Governor Joseph Brown of Georgia added his appeal to the others. Davis detested Brown, and with very good reason, for the Georgia governor had opposed and thwarted him in every way. Brown's interference strengthened the President's determination not to give Johnston the desired

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 38, Part IV, 762.

assistance. He replied to Brown that the disparity between the opposing armies in Georgia was less than elsewhere. (This is almost exactly the language used by Bragg.) Forrest's command was already operating on one of Sherman's lines, he added, and was needed for the defense of Mississippi.[1]

This shows that at the end of June, 1864, Jefferson Davis was unaware of the seriousness of the situation. He thought that Sherman's army was weaker than it was and that Johnston's was stronger. For this belief Braxton Bragg was responsible, for he had deliberately cultivated it for months; and yet Davis himself is much to blame for accepting at their face value the statements of a man who had hopelessly failed, and who had thus every reason to discredit his successor. We forgive crimes in great men, but not stupidity; and in the extent in which Jefferson Davis relied on Bragg there was sheer, crass stupidity.

Johnston made numerous appeals to Bragg, as well as to Davis, for Forrest's aid, repeating that he was not strong enough to hold back Sherman. He was appealing to the man who was determined on his overthrow. On June 27, Bragg tartly replied that there was no cavalry to send him, that it was all needed elsewhere. To Davis the military adviser wrote that there was no way to reënforce Johnston—at least from Mississippi, where Johnston had better return some of the troops he had drawn rather than to attempt to draw others. This message confirmed Davis in his opinion that Johnston was making unreasonable demands, that he had force enough to win a victory if he would only use it. By this time Bragg was thinking more of overthrowing Johnston than of defeating the enemy, or he would never have

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 52, Part II, Supplement, 681.

advanced the absurd suggestion that the general ought to send back a part of his small army to Mississippi.

Another plea from Governor Brown for Forrest's cavalry brought a stinging rebuke from Davis. "Your telegram received. Your dicta cannot control the distribution of troops in different parts of the Confederate states. Most men in your position would not assume to decide on the value of the services to be rendered by troops in distant positions." [1]

Was this not a message of evil augury to send to a politician already disaffected to the government and capable of doing great harm? It is an instance of Jefferson Davis's essentially passionate, impolitic nature. Brown replied, and scored in his reply, "I venture to predict that your official estimates of Sherman's numbers are as incorrect as your official calculations of Missionary Ridge were erroneous." [2]

The Georgia governor, however, sought to find a more effective means of awakening the President to a sense of reality than appeals to deaf ears. At that time Senator B. H. Hill happened to be in Georgia, and Hill was a consistent supporter of Davis and as close to him as any other politician. Knowing this, Brown sent for him on the last day of June and impressed him with the gravity of the situation and the absolute necessity of having Forrest assail the Union communications. The next day the senator saw Johnston, who confirmed all that Brown had said and declared that Sherman could not be beaten except by an attack on his line of supply.

Hill consented to go to Richmond and make a direct appeal to the President. When he arrived in Richmond, he found Davis raging at Johnston's continuous retreat and

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 38, Part IV, 762.
[2] *O. R.*, Series I, 52, Part II, Supplement, 687.

the requests for more troops and he did not have the nerve to attempt to undeceive him. He telegraphed Johnston what was, in effect, a plea for him to fight in order to satisfy the government: "You must do your work with your present force. For God's sake do it."

Bragg had fully indoctrinated Davis with the idea that Johnston had troops enough for his task. As day after day went by without news of a battle, the President's anger grew into intense irritability and obstinacy. On June 23, he informed Bragg that Johnston must be notified that he could have no more troops from Alabama and Mississippi. In fact, the President was still attempting to keep up his system of garrisons and dispersed forces when it was evident that only by immediate and general concentration could the main armies of the Union be met.

Johnston was absolutely right. The move against Sherman's communications offered the one reasonable hope of success. If the communications were broken, Sherman would have to retreat and the lower South would be temporarily saved. If they were not broken, he could advance indefinitely. The trouble was that his supply railway was so strongly guarded that it could not be cut by less than 8,000 or 10,000 cavalry. The troops were available, and Forrest was an incomparable leader for such a feat, but to concentrate the cavalry in the West meant the final abandonment of Davis's defensive system and the opening of Alabama and Mississippi to Union raids. The President, who was very loath to take this step, demanded of Johnston why he did not cut the railroad with the cavalry of his army. Johnston replied that his cavalry was not able to cope with Sherman's, much less make raids. But Davis, bitterly angry with Johnston and convinced that he did not fight simply be-

cause he lacked the courage, refused to send the cavalry and, as it turned out, threw away the one last chance of the South to win. In this tragedy, Braxton Bragg was the principal, Davis the unhappy second.

The President, who would not take the risk of laying open territory to the enemy, was considering taking the far greater risk of attacking Sherman's superior army. It was evidently necessary to do something. With every mile of Sherman's advance the peril of a complete breakdown grew. Brown, now wholly at odds with Davis, ventured on a degree of opposition to the government that bordered on treason. He was both angry and disheartened. He hampered the government at every turn, refusing food, declining to allow the use of the state railroads, returning a negative to all requests. At the moment of supreme need he kept thousands of able-bodied men out of the army in order to form his state force for home defense. Some of this militia he sent on a short-term loan to Johnston when Atlanta was endangered, but the recruits, though plucky, were of no great value. First and last, he may have robbed the service of 10,000 men, of whom it stood in desperate need.

Sherman was so encouraged by Brown's defiance of Davis that he invited the governor and Alexander H. Stephens to a conference with a view of getting Georgia to secede from secessia. Brown and Stephens, however, were not traitors and they declined. Stephens was constitution crazy. Brown was not without patriotism, but he was a popularity hunter and imbued with a hatred for Davis. He thought that Georgia had made enough sacrifices for a doomed cause and he refused to make others.

Johnston still had the entire confidence of the army, but as he fell back toward middle Georgia the farmers began to

clamor for his removal; they were terrified by the specter of plunder and ruin that the continued advance of the Union army brought them. This mistaken outcry strengthened Davis in his dawning determination to remove Johnston and replace him with a man who would fight, because it made him believe that such a move would not be altogether unpopular. It was the end toward which Bragg had labored ever since Johnston succeeded to the command of the army.

On July 14, Davis returned a final answer to Johnston's demands for Forrest's assistance. He refused, and gave petty reasons for his refusal. If cavalry were withdrawn from Alabama the Tombigbee Valley would be laid open; and if from Mississippi, Selma and the arsenals. On that very day the President was preparing for the final step, for he sent an inquiry to the adjutant-general as to the original size of Johnston's army, the number of reënforcements sent him, and the size of the army at its last return. This was done in order to verify Bragg's assertion that Johnston had had a large army at the opening of the campaign and that his losses, even without battle, had been large. Hood, one of Johnston's corps commanders, had sent Bragg this information. There were no very accurate reports as to the size of the army at Dalton, but Davis was satisfied that Bragg was right and that the losses had been considerable.

Johnston had now no friend at court. Bragg hated him, and Davis and Bragg together had convinced Seddon, his original supporter, that he was no general. Seddon's letters show this. Not a voice was raised in his behalf except that of the newspapers, for it was already bruited that Johnston was to be relieved and the newspapers exhibited great uneasiness. They thoroughly distrusted Davis's judgment.

Davis had made up his mind to remove Johnston, but he

had not decided on his successor. That most difficult problem gave him sleepless nights and nervous headaches. He need not have troubled himself, however. Bragg had long before made the decision for him, though the military advisers played out the comedy of a pretended examination of the military situation. Bragg went to Atlanta to get firsthand information for the President, arriving there on July 13, a coincidence that almost seems to justify superstition. His real errand was to make arrangements for the transfer of the army to another. He was not wholly moved by personal animus, but partly by the retreat itself. His intelligence was not sufficient to enable him to appreciate Johnston's strategy. He was essentially a fighting soldier who hated trenches, withdrawals and all other methods of avoiding shock. In a way, indeed, he was a heroic soul, for he was a fighter who did not like to fight. It always took him agonizing efforts to screw his nerve up to fight, and yet he fought. Fearing the enemy greatly, he stood his ground—usually, with unfortunate results.

Yet his main motive was hatred of Johnston, who had succeeded him and who was as popular as he was unpopular. He designated Hood for the command of the army since he could not hope to have it himself. Bragg had become thick with Hood while the latter was at Richmond convalescing from a desperate wound received at Chickamauga. The fierce soldier, albeit minus a leg, was an object of interest to the girls of the capital, who greatly petted him. Hood saw much of the President, too, and rode out with him. He learned from Bragg how to approach Davis acceptably. Once Davis, in a fit of anger, denounced some officers to Hood, who turned suddenly and said, "Mr. President, why don't you come and lead us your-

self? I would follow you to the death." This was so exactly in Bragg's style that it must have been pleasing to the harassed Davis, who still liked to fancy himself a great soldier. At all events, Hood left Richmond a lieutenant general and it was rumored at the time that he was considered for the command of the Western army.

Davis would not make such a move without consulting Lee. On July 12, he told the latter, "General Johnston has failed, and there are strong indications that he will abandon Atlanta. Seems necessary to relieve him. What think you of Hood?" The next day Davis sent a second message stating that Johnston had an ample cavalry force and that he was able to stop Sherman but would not.

Unhappily, Lee did not give an outright answer. He so feared doing Hood an injustice that he refrained from saying that his former subordinate was unfit to command an army, though he implied it. He wrote, "It is a bad time to release the commander of an army situated as that of Tennessee. We may lose Atlanta, and the army too. [An excellent forecast.] Hood is a bold fighter. I am doubtful as to other qualifications necessary." And again, "Hood is a good fighter, very industrious on the battlefield, careless off, and I have no opportunity of judging of his action when the whole responsibility rested upon him. I have a high opinion of his gallantry, earnestness and zeal." [1] This unsatisfactory opinion did not turn Davis from his determination, though he might have seen, if he had read between the lines, that Lee credited Hood with all the qualifications of a general but brains. But possibly Davis believed that Bragg at Atlanta would supply the brains. What he wanted was a man of action to carry out Bragg's plans. There are strong

[1] *Lee's Dispatches* (Freeman), 282, 284.

indications that both he and Bragg expected the latter to be the real commander, with Hood as figurehead. Thus Bragg would be restored *malgré* the nation and the nation's will.

Bragg, on his arrival at Atlanta, telegraphed Davis that the signs pointed to the evacuation of that city. It was on this point that Davis took his stand; in fact, he had arranged with Bragg before his departure that this was to be the test demanded of Johnston. The President had asked assurances of the commander that he would fight to keep Atlanta, the most important railway junction in the lower South. Johnston returned no definite reply. Now Bragg reported that Atlanta was to be given up, later adding: "Our army depleted. 10,000 less than the return of June 10. I find but little to encourage." The military adviser had not gone to Atlanta to find anything encouraging, and naturally he found what he sought.

Bragg was constantly with Hood, but saw little of Johnston. Hood declared that Johnston had lost several chances to fight battles at an advantage and that the army had diminished by 20,000 men. He, Hood, had urged battle so often that he had gained the reputation of being reckless.[1]

Bragg informed Davis that the situation could be improved in only one way, by offensive action. He had been saying the same thing ever since February. He was candid enough, however, to add a premise which, to a cooler mind would have condemned his conclusion: "Position, numbers and morale are now with the enemy." Yet, in spite of that terrible trinity of disadvantages, he counseled attack, and Hood agreed. "The morale," Bragg went on, "though damaged, of course [by the retreat from Dalton] is still good."

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 38, Part V, 879.

One might infer from Bragg's tone that the morale when he himself resigned soon after Missionary Ridge was high, and that it had been lowered by Johnston's cautious methods. He underestimated Sherman's strength and gave the impression that there was a reasonable chance of defeating the Union army in battle. He suggested Hood if a new commander was to be appointed, which was a mere formality. His postscript is instructive, as it shows his rancor against Johnston: "As General J. has not sought my advice, nor even afforded me a fair opportunity of giving my opinion, I have obtruded neither upon him. Such will continue to be my course." [1]

Altogether, Davis was ill-served by his agent. It would hardly be the truth to say that Bragg intentionally misled him, because Bragg himself was probably misled by Hood, who was in turn overcome by ambition and impatience to fight. The net result was that Jefferson Davis conceived a wholly misleading view of the situation and serenely plunged down into Avernus. The President himself was very blameworthy in the matter. He had put Bragg in a false position by sending him on such a mission, for it is too severe a test of human nature to set up a derided failure as the judge of a beloved successor. It was natural for Bragg to wish to visit on Johnston the bitter humiliation he himself had suffered. Davis should never have given such an opportunity to so interested a party. He should have sent an unbiased investigator to Atlanta.

The result of Davis's confidence in his military adviser, wedded to Bragg's fundamentally unsound judgment and his animosity against Johnston, was a decision to stake the future of the country on the chance of winning a victory

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 38, Part V, 880.

by hurling an inferior force on a superior army protected by trenches. It was simply throwing dice with Fate, and with Fate's loaded dice. There was no rational hope of success, but the actors in the tragedy were all irrational. Davis was warped by Bragg's long-continued insinuations against Johnston and by his own distrust of the officer; Bragg was daft with rancor; and Hood was beside himself with the ambition of showing himself another Jackson. Yet Davis was assailed by misgivings at the last moment and he asked Bragg if it would not be best, after all, to put Forrest on Sherman's communications. Bragg's reply, on July 15, is a model of fatuousness: "I am decidedly opposed, as it would perpetuate the past and present policy which he [Johnston] has advised and now sustains. Any change will be attended with some objections. This one could do no good." [1]

This message decided the matter. One mission with which Bragg was charged was to sound Hood on his willingness to attack Sherman: Davis wished to make certain on this score. Hood informed Bragg of his entire confidence in his ability to defeat Sherman, which assurance settled the last doubt. What more impressive lesson could there be of the value of self-confidence! When Bragg telegraphed Davis that Hood was unafraid, the President resolved to give him the command. The consummation toward which Bragg and Hood had worked so long had been reached.

On July 17, Adjutant-General Cooper telegraphed Johnston that as he had failed to stop the advance of the enemy and expressed no confidence in his ability to defeat them he was relieved and Hood was appointed in his place. Johnston wept tears of mortification in secret, but he was

[1] *O. R.*, Series I, 52, Part IV, 707.

too patriotic to find consolation in reflecting on the certain doom of his successor. The news of the change was heard through the country with dismay, though there was a faint hope in some quarters that a genius had come to light in the person of Hood. The newspapers that did not condemn the President's action were non committal. The atmosphere of the Confederacy was tense with anxiety, as the people recognized that a step had been taken which would be followed by decisive victory or decisive defeat. Fear outweighed hope.

For the first time in the war, Jefferson Davis had ventured to make a radical appointment. His former selections for high places had been soldiers of reputation, such as Lee, the two Johnstons, and Beauregard, or personal friends, such as Bragg and Pemberton. Now he picked out a young man he had known but slightly. He had decided to discover talent.

John B. Hood was an officer of rising reputation. He had, of course, the one thing needful—a diploma from West Point. Fame had come to him as the head of a Texas brigade, the best in the service. He had risen as far as division general under Lee, had then been so lucky as to win Bragg's friendship, and was successively made corps general and army commander. His chief exploit as leader of a corps had been to criticize Johnston's strategy: he was now to have an opportunity to prove Johnston wrong. A born fighter, a perfect animal organism without knowledge of fear, he was little affected by wounds that would have killed men of less superabundant vitality. In appearance, as in character, he was the typical Nordic fighting man, with his stalwart presence, his blue eyes and his long golden beard. He might have been Cœur de Lion reincarnated. It shows

how unerringly race tells that in the last crisis of the Con federacy, when a fighter was demanded, the choice fell on this pure-blooded Nordic, this descendant of the viking past

The corps and division generals received the new com mander with silent dismay; he had not impressed them as a genius. Hardee, who had been considered a second time for the command, felt the indignity of serving under a young and inexperienced man. Having no confidence in Hood and Hood's—or Bragg's—aggressive policy, the gen erals could not lend hearty coöperation to the butchery they saw was pending. Indeed, the corps generals, including Hood, asked the President not to make a change of com manders in such a crisis, but Davis replied that the act could not be undone. Then Hood accepted the charge.

It was Bragg's theory that Johnston had injured the morale of the army by keeping it behind trenches. Ap parently, he did not reflect that Sherman had not lowered the Union morale by using trenches; Sherman was one of the first great masters of trench warfare. Bragg was of the impression that the tone of the army of Tennessee would be improved by another bleeding; he did not consider that it was an army that had suffered all things because of bad generalship and had hoped for nothing until Johnston came to command it.

Bragg and Hood now arranged for an attack on the enemy, which took place on July 22. The Union troops were driven from some rows of trenches, but the Confederate losses, as might have been foreseen, were much the greater. Hood claimed a victory and Bragg wrote Davis that the moral effect of the battle had been admirable and that the enemy had suffered more than the Southerners. "He was badly defeated and completely failed in one of his bold

flanking movements, heretofore so successful." But the fiction that a victory had been gained could not be kept up, for Sherman was closing in on Atlanta from all sides. Bragg now went away to Alabama, possibly repelled by Hood, possibly prophetic of coming events. He had succeeded in his design: he had overthrown Johnston. Only the Confederacy was to fall with Johnston.

Sherman continued his flanking movements, and Hood, after several more engagements, found himself unable to check them. At the beginning of September, Sherman reached the railroads behind Atlanta, and Hood was forced to give up the town after another fruitless fight. He sent word to Davis that the loss of Atlanta was immaterial, but the news flashed through the South and the world that the great Confederate strategic point had fallen.

The country was raving. The press and the public had witnessed Hood's substitution for Johnston with grave misgivings. Dumbfounded consternation passed into wild denunciation over the defeat of the army and the loss of Atlanta. In that moment of national agony, Jefferson Davis was really repudiated by the Southern people.

XIII

WANTED A CROMWELL

JEFFERSON DAVIS had failed. It is beside the question to argue whether he had failed well or ignobly, whether another in his place would have done better or worse. As a matter of fact, he had made a great and creditable effort, even though it had been in vain. Still he had failed and could not be expected to do aught but go on failing to the end. But for the Constitution of the United States, with which the Confederacy had burdened itself, there can be no doubt that Davis would have been superseded after the fall of Atlanta—a referendum would have retired him overwhelmingly—but the constitution kept him in power despite his mistakes and the will of the people. If the South was to be saved, Davis must be set aside for some one whom the people trusted sufficiently to follow. There was but one possible hope, and that was a military dictatorship. Yet for this a revolution would be necessary, a radical revolution within the conservative secession revolution. The sole question was whether this last-hope revolution would occur, or whether the country would quietly perish under its constitutional authorities.

Jefferson Davis had done his best, and that had been a great deal. He had not been able, however, to seize those chances on which the success of the South depended. He had not invaded the North when invasion promised much;

on the defensive he had not employed the interior lines of communication to advantage; he had not bought up cotton and exported it in the early period; he had not approached Europe with tempting offers; he had not mobilized the negroes to recruit his waning armies; he had made disastrous appointments to high command.

Such is the indictment of Davis: it has been often made and is familiar. What is less known is the much that he laboriously and bravely accomplished. It is the story of a national patching-out seldom equaled; of turning a mob into an army; of raking a country without gunneries for arms and equipment; of building homemade warships out of scrap iron and of buying a navy in Europe *sub rosa;* of making some sort of transportation system out of a series of one-horse railroads; of improvising administrative departments without buildings and officials; of conducting a great war on fiat currency; of getting food and clothing for soldiers by impressment and taxes in kind; of manufacturing munitions without chemicals; of so juggling as to have efficient rule without fatally violating states' rights; of making bricks without straw. Such are some of the counts to the credit of Jefferson Davis.

In the autumn of 1864, the Southern people thought only of the mistakes, not the accomplishments. The country was perishing; the cause was visibly failing. Jefferson Davis, still at the head of the government, if discredited, had to think of something to do. He had again to take up his weary burden. The situation had to be faced. What would he do?

With all his dislike of Johnston, the President could not fail to see that Hood had not bettered matters by losing several battles and 10,000 men. Accordingly, he made his

third important trip of the war in September, 1864, visiting Hood's camp in Georgia and consulting the general. The visit was marked by a disquieting incident. Once while the President was reviewing the troops, he was greeted with cries of "Give us General Johnston!" [1] The tumult did not last long, but it revealed the temper of the army. Hood offered to resign, but Davis would not accede. Beauregard was made head of the department, and Hood was continued in command of the army. Davis no longer believed in him, but he was too obstinate to remove a man whom he had elevated against the will of the country.

New plans had to be devised. By this time Hood had had enough of attacking Sherman; and, much too late, Johnston's despised strategy was adopted. It was decided that Hood should march northward and destroy Sherman's communications. Most imprudently, the President advertised the plan in a speech at Macon, Georgia, made by him in an effort to rally the ebbing spirits of the people. He went on to Montgomery, speaking along the way to unenthusiastic crowds thoroughly weary of the war.

Sherman was troubled for only a moment by the threat against his rear. He advanced toward Hood, who declined to give battle and withdrew to the north. Hood believed that the destruction of the Union communications might force a retreat. Unfortunately, the supply railroad, so all-important while Sherman was in the mountains, no longer mattered now that he had reached the great grainfields and had only to march to the seacoast to meet a provisioning fleet. So when Hood began to tear up the railway, Sherman began, undisturbed, his descent to the sea.

Hood's conduct was that of distraction. He who so

[1] J. B. Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 253.

shortly before had been confident of his ability to beat Sherman now thought that resistance to the latter was hopeless. His only plan was to push into Tennessee and attack the Union garrisons there on the chance that Sherman would be forced to return north to protect them. It was the old plan of the spring—an invasion of Tennessee—essayed under conditions seldom paralleled in war. A defeated general was moving away from the enemy, leaving them unopposed, in order to invade the enemy country. The movement was comic-opera generalship. Nothing could be accomplished by driving the Union garrisons out of Tennessee, for they would immediately return on the inevitable Confederate retreat. To hold the state permanently was now unthinkable.

Davis's enemies charged him with concocting this scheme. The charge has this much probability, that Hood's movement was the offensive that Bragg had urged in the spring and that the President desired to have attempted. Yet Hood specifically declares that the plan was his and that Davis neither suggested it nor approved of it. He states that Davis wanted a battle fought on the edge of Tennessee, thinking that the army was still strong enough to oppose Sherman. If this statement is true, Hood moved into Tennessee in order to avoid the battle and to do something, since he had to do something.

He was probably right in leaving Sherman, for the wreck of an army he now commanded could have accomplished little by merely dogging the footsteps of the Union host. The one thing that promised anything at all was a feint against Tennessee, to be followed by a rapid shifting of the army to Richmond in concert with a general concentration of all available troops at that point. Lee then might have

been able to attack Grant with a hope of success. This was the South's only possibility of victory in the autumn of 1864. But it was a forlorn hope.

Lee, however, was too much occupied with his own army to formulate such a plan and Hood was left to his devices. With Forrest's efficient aid—for Forrest, much too late, had been ordered to join the main army—Hood advanced toward Nashville. But the Confederates marched with a prevision of doom and only out of a devoted sense of duty; and the corps generals threw away an opportunity to win a victory over a Union detachment moving to Nashville. The Unionists took up a strong position at Franklin, and the unhappy Southern leader could think of nothing but one of his costly assaults on trenches. This attack was more costly than any before. The unfortunate Confederates, sent by wretched generalship up a steep hill against entrenched troops armed with modern artillery and repeating rifles, were mowed down by thousands; among those who fell was the brilliant and devoted Cleburne. Seldom have soldiers shown greater bravery and discipline than the Southerners at Franklin, for they were without hope and knew that they were commanded by one now little better than an imbecile. They even won a victory, since they succeeded in driving off the Unionists in the end, but it was the hollowest of victories.

Hood continued his insanity by advancing to Nashville and taking up a position confronting a larger army under Thomas. Here he remained for some time, though he had no intention of making an attack. It is probable that he had ceased to think at all. Thomas made his preparations with deliberation and then proceeded to destroy his adversary. The Confederates were utterly routed and were in

a desperate position, north of the Tennessee River and destitute of supplies and clothing. The cavalry pursuing them was alone as numerous as the fugitive Southerners. Nevertheless, the remnant escaped and persisted as an army by an exhibition of gameness that commands all admiration. The story of Hood's retreat is one of honor: hopeless, starving, freezing, trampling barefoot through the slush, the thin line that was the rear guard formed time and again across the snowy fields and drove back the blue masses of cavalry with sheets of flame. The line of ragamuffins could not be broken, and the pitiful handful of survivors recrossed the Tennessee with colors still flying. Here Hood closed a career of disaster by resigning. The gamble had turned out in favor of the bank.

In December, 1864, with catastrophe crowding on catastrophe, Davis's health utterly failed for a time. For days he remained in his house, and the rumor spread in Richmond that he was at the point of death. In fact his nerves had completely collapsed. He was shattered, wracked with neuralgia, unable to work. But his will soon rallied, and by Christmas he was back in his office, haggard and thinner than ever but master of himself. It was observed, however, that he shunned all business except appointments. With the inevitable staring him in the face, he found a certain respite from thought in plunging into routine details, which had always given him pleasure. Plans and policies were nothing now but hopeless dreams.

The people were demanding a new leader in place of the President who had failed. It is the worst of fallacies to think that the Southerners were less ardent in their desire for independence at the close of 1864 than in 1862. Early in the war there was still a strong feeling of attachment to

the old Union among the people, a certain desire for reconstruction. By 1864 the Southern people looked on themselves as a nation and on the Unionists as foreign invaders. The loose confederacy of slave states had grown into a real nationality which continued until 1898 and another war, when the United States may be said to have merged into the American nation. If anything was needed to stimulate the last passions of patriotism in the South, it was supplied by the ravages of Sheridan in Virginia and Sherman in Georgia. The Southern people were not conquered by this severity: on the contrary they were so stimulated by fury that the war would have burst out with renewed energy if a national leader had come forward.

National leader there was in the person of Robert E. Lee. The great general commanded the love and confidence of the South. His nobility of character had something to do with his immense popularity, but his success much more, for almost to the last the colors of his army waved in triumph. There might be defeat and surrender everywhere else, but the army of Virginia under his leadership remained proud and confident. His troops still calmly believed in their superiority to the Union foe.

Yet the time had come when Lee could do nothing more as a mere army commander. He was the subordinate of a government that had lost the trust of the people. Davis still held the reins, still directed affairs. The people believed in Lee as fully as they disbelieved in Davis. But Lee as a subordinate was somewhat aloof from them: the government stood between. It was a situation which offered much to an ambitious man who was also a man of action, for an ambitious man would not have been troubled by constitutional scruples in such a crisis. War is a relentless test

and has no respect for duly-constituted authority: its sole criterion is efficiency. Davis had failed and it made no difference that he was the constitutional ruler. Lee had succeeded to a large extent in his individual sphere and the hour had come for him to be the head of the nation.

If he had demanded the dictatorship, there can be no question but what the act would have been rapturously applauded by the people. Two years before a dictatorship had been talked of in the newspapers, and the suggestion was familiar to all. The talk quickened into a demand for a dictator in the last days of 1864 as it became increasingly evident that Jefferson Davis, whatever his merits, was wholly unable to meet the situation that was arising from the conquest of the lower South by Sherman. It was a situation somewhat similar to the crises in which Julius Cæsar, Cromwell and Napoleon had made themselves the head of the state. A dictatorship would be illegal, of course—but why consider legality with the invader at the door!

Everything hinged on Lee's attitude. If he was willing, the *coup d'état* would be easily effected. Indeed, Congress might be enlisted to give an appearance of legality to it: Congress would have gone to great lengths to get rid of the President. There is a tradition that William C. Rives, earlier a supporter of Davis, actually offered Lee the dictatorship in the name of a congressional junta and that Lee refused it. If this is true, Congress was right. A dictator might have done many things impossible for a constitutional government: seized the railroads, impressed food wherever found, drafted thousands of negroes, sacrificed everything to put troops in the field by early spring.

It was necessary, however, for Lee to strike for himself, and in no uncertain terms. He could not inspire the nation

to the supreme effort demanded as the subordinate of the derided President, whom the nation had repudiated. Lee would not raise his hand against the Lord's anointed, and whatever chance the South had passed swiftly.

There are two gods worshiped by the great spirits of this world, the God of Success and the God of Virtue. It would be a mistake to imagine that the God of Success is not an exacting master; in fact, he demands every surrender from his devotees, including that of honor. But he gives victory, great and glorious. His votaries are such as Cæsar, Cromwell and Napoleon. Those who bow down before the God of Virtue are the kind of Washington and Lee—men who play the game with all their strength but strictly by the rules. If they cannot win by the rules, they lose. Often they lose, but so honorably that they almost make failure seem better than success. Lee could not have brought himself to overthrow the government and seize the dictatorship because to do that would have been against his nature, all sincerity and loyalty. Within what he considered the exact limits of his authority and his duty he did all that was in his power to win. He would not overstep those limits an inch. If the cause could not succeed under its authorized government, it must fail. His life was his country's; his honor was his own.

To a less scrupulous man the temptation must have been great. Congress was in open opposition to the hard-driven President. It was a body much reviled at the time and neglected since, but it was in the main genuinely patriotic and well-meaning. In the early period of the war it followed Davis's recommendations closely, but as the war began to go against the South its attitude changed. It was long in asserting itself, for it had no historical position comparable to that of the United States Congress, of which it was but a

feeble wraith. The Southern body was the creature of a day, condemned to occupy lodgings in the Virginia statehouse, where the Senate was poorly accommodated: it was separated from the spectators merely by a railing. Thus the dignity that tradition and proper externals supply was wanting.

Davis held a clear majority in the First Congress. But the military disasters of 1863 and the growing dissatisfaction of the people were reflected in the election of the Second Congress in the year of Vicksburg. Many opponents of Davis were chosen, and Davis's majority vanished. From the beginning of 1864 until the end of the war he faced a steadily rising opposition that might well have culminated in a revolution if a leader had appeared.

The foremost men in Congress were Robert Toombs, Howell Cobb and Robert Barnwell; and next to them, Wigfall of Texas, "fierce, impatient, incandescent; Orr, of South Carolina, an excellent man in the committee-room, but as heavy and blundering as a school-boy in his speeches; and Hill, of Georgia, the very picture of smooth and plausible mediocrity, inclining to the administration of the President, but at an angle nice and variable." [1]

In the House of Representatives were "Foote, a voluble debater, but afflicted with extravagance and a colicky delivery; William Porcher Miles, of South Carolina, smooth, scrupulously dressed, a master of deportment, and a type indeed of the truest cultivation; Barksdale, of Mississippi, the especial friend and champion of Mr. Davis, the leader of the administration party in the House, a small, dark-featured man who spoke vehemently; James Lyons, of Virginia, who was satisfied with the shallow reputation of the 'handsome member.' "

[1] Pollard, 311.

Davis was not very close to Congress. Cobb, Barnwel and Hill were in his confidence to some extent and saw hin frequently; but the ablest men, Toombs and Wigfall, were in opposition and the minor members were not kept well in hand. Opponents were not conciliated. The most galling adversary was Wigfall, who constituted himself the especia champion of Joseph E. Johnston and directed a bitter criticism of the government's military policy. In the final period the controversy of Davis and Johnston over the operations in Georgia in the summer of 1864 came to be the great issue in Southern politics. Davis's most dangerous enemy was Stephens, the Vice President, who openly denounced the administration in speeches that did much to spread dissatisfaction and who was echoed in the House of Representatives by Foote, the President's lifelong enemy.

Stephens, like Lee, was a worshiper of the God of Virtue, but, unlike Lee, he was an insane votary. Lee's attitude was simply that of absolute loyalty to the government in whose service he drew his sword. Stephens went back of the government to the constitution, of which he made himself the especial guardian. His was the monomania of constitutional liberty. In his devotion to the letter of liberty he was willing to sacrifice liberty itself, preferring to see the cause go down in ruin rather than sanction an unconstitutional enlargement of the executive power. Or, rather, in his doctrinaire infatuation, he believed that strict constitutionalism had some traumaturgic virtue by means of which success could be miraculously compelled. Was the cause languishing, disaster impending? It was all due to the autocracy of Jefferson Davis, the illegal conscription, the Tax in Kind, this and that infraction of the constitution; and Stephens had a witch doctor's nose for smelling out infrac-

tions of the constitution. If the President would only be strictly constitutional, the people would rally to him and the cause would flourish!

Needless to say, this was insanity. It was a noble madness, however—one sadly needed now—and it would not have been without its value but for its desperate unseasonableness. As it was, Stephens caused the government more trouble than all the traitors combined: every form of resistance and malingering drew encouragement from him. He began his active opposition in 1862 with the conscription. He declared that this measure was both illegal and unnecessary. He seems to have believed that a simple appeal to the people would have immediately brought forward an abundance of volunteers, a gross fallacy. In fact, the fragile, embittered Georgian, like many other men of intelligence in civil affairs, was totally destitute of military understanding. He continued to go about making speeches against the draft —one before the Georgia legislature in March, 1864—and seriously embarrassed the authorities in executing the law. The government would have been justified in imprisoning him, his activities were so mischievous. So much for the wisdom of attempting to reconcile Unionists to secession by electing one of them Vice President! Policy, in thy name what idiocies are committed!

In Congress and out, Stephens continued his opposition to the government.[1] Any effort at strong government enraged him, for he could not understand why a state engaged in a struggle for existence should depart in the least from peace methods. In a speech in April, 1864, against the suspension of the *habeas corpus*, he declared that independence was of no value without liberty and that if he must

[1] Louis Pendleton, *Alexander H. Stephens*, 296.

have a master he cared little whether that master was Northern or Southern.[1] The *habeas corpus* was suspended for the sufficient reason that it was being used to defeat conscription and rescue dangerous military offenders. Stephens's accusations of tyranny injured the government and encouraged malcontents everywhere.

Worst of all was his continual wailing for peace, as if peace were to be had for wailing. He believed, in his infatuation, that the South could have peace whenever it desired it, if only the obstinate and perverse Davis would make overtures. Wearied with his unending demands to open negotiations, the President permitted him to mention peace in a mission he was sent on in 1863 about the exchange of prisoners. The effort was a complete failure, as the Northern government made no response. Worse, Stephens's eager babbling revealed to the astute politicians in Washington the deep despondency prevailing in the South.[2] This miscarriage had no effect on the Vice President: he continued to propagate the belief that only Davis's obstinacy stood between the country and peace, an idea as false as it was mischievous. Lastly, his black pessimism, openly displayed, disheartened every one who came within his influence. He seems never to have had much hope of success and completely to have given up the fight early in the war. What kind of peace he hoped for it is impossible to say, for he was incoherent, but it appears to have been nothing but a return to the Union under some kind of vague compromise agreement, as if the subject of slavery could be still compromised on!

So untrue was it that Jefferson Davis stood in the way

[1] Jones, 2, 187.
[2] Pendleton, 311.

of peace that in July, 1864, he incurred the wrath of the Richmond newspapers by an undignified and undiplomatic grasping at the possibility of opening negotiations. He received two obscure Northerners who came to Richmond and let them know of his entire willingness to treat with Washington. "Here come two ignorant, impudent Yankee characters," said the *Examiner*, "picked up at the first street corner, without credentials or character, who got in one day a complete anterior view of the dispositions and opinions of the Confederate government." [1] This move was so unlike Davis that it may have been advised by Benjamin, who understood the urgent need of doing something and would have liked to get in touch with the Northern government.

Peace talk continued, and peace discussions occupied the time of Congress. Foote demanded the opening of negotiations on the plain basis of surrender. Early in 1865, Stephens in the Senate moved for the appointment of commissioners to confer with the Union government. About this time, the prominent Francis P. Blair was permitted to come to Richmond on a confidential mission to suggest a way of ending the war by the joint action of the opposing armies in Mexico. The proposal was a mere pretext, a scheme for laying bare the depression of the Southern leaders. The peace party, however, hailed Blair's coming with delight. Davis was not deceived, but he was persuaded by Benjamin to open negotiations. The President probably wished to hoist Stephens with his own petard. Stephens had proclaimed that peace was to be had for the asking: Davis now sent him to procure it.

The President himself would not be a party to the farce, declining to meet Lincoln, as Blair suggested. He appointed

[1] January 6, 1865.

Stephens, R. M. T. Hunter and former Supreme Court justice James A. Campbell to represent him. Stephens actually seems to have set off with hope, a fact that illustrates his fundamental absurdity better than words. The futility of negotiations at once appeared when put to the test. Lincoln and Seward met the three Confederate commissioners at Hampton Roads and offered no concessions whatever. They had but played, through Blair, with the Southern leaders, who frankly revealed their utter hopelessness. The President and Secretary of State went back to Washington with the comfortable assurance that the war was over. If the Confederacy had had any further vitality, the Hampton Roads Conference would have been damaging; but, as it was, the expiring patient was beyond injury.

The incident closed the malapropos career of Stephens as a Confederate—a career in which he had done nothing for the cause and much against it, not from want of patriotism but from lack of common sense. Stephens was a very high man, above personal considerations. Indeed, alone in American history, he recalls the character of Cato. But an idealism incurable by fact, grief over the separation of the South from the Union and the horrors of war distracted his impressionable mind and made him a liability to his country and one of the causes of its overthrow. He is an excellent illustration of the evil a good man may do when he becomes divorced from sanity.

The fiasco of the peace mission strengthened Davis for a moment, though only for a moment. A mass meeting of citizens in the African church in Richmond in March, 1865, listened to the greatest speech of his life as he strove to arouse the people to a new determination to conquer. He spoke with such power that the audience was carried away

and cheered wildly. Eleventh hour speeches, however, could not change the course of events. At another meeting, Benjamin boldly announced the government's intention to make negro soldiers a large factor in the war. Yes, with his back to the wall, Jefferson Davis had come to this! More, on Benjamin's persuasion, France was secretly informed that the Confederacy was willing to abandon slavery. Indeed, Davis was prepared to adopt any course, make any sacrifice that would avert the doom of the falling state. All too late!

The government had been inevitably driven to tap the one source of man power left. Cleburne's plan, completely squelched at the beginning of 1864, now bore fruit.[1] The idea spread and was generally approved. Jefferson Davis, however, in his conservatism would probably have hesitated still longer but for the advice of Benjamin and the urgings of Lee, who wanted negro soldiers. In his message to Congress of November, 1864, the President actually, though not openly, asked for the enlistment of blacks. On account of the desperate condition of affairs, Congress did not oppose the request, as it would otherwise doubtless have done. It dallied instead. The two sets of weary lawyers that made up Congress fiddled while Rome burned, after the immemorial custom of lawyers. They ineptly debated and amended while the nation swiftly perished. Whatever merit Davis's proposal might have had in the first place was dissipated by the feeble and dilatory conduct of Congress, which finally, in the last weeks of the Confederacy, actually got a slave-soldier bill passed. This slowness was due in part to the public distrust of the idea and partly to the President's unpopularity. If the measure had been in-

[1] J. A. Buck, *Cleburne and his Command*, 212.

troduced by Davis's opponents, it would have fared better.

There was a pet Southern theory, slowly yielding to hard fact, that negroes would not make soldiers, and Congress continually dwelt on it. Why enlist men, it was argued, who would be of no service? Besides, the little politicians were not prepared to emancipate slaves in order to provide soldiers, though Davis, Benjamin and Lee were completely reconciled to it.

Chambers of Mississippi said in Congress: "The negroes will not fight. All history shows that."

Simson of South Carolina (*sotto voce*): "The Yankees make them fight."

Lester of Georgia: "Not much."

Marshall, of course of Kentucky: "Fill them with whiskey and they will fight." [1]

The interminable deliberations of Congress were hurried by Lee. He, practical man, wanted soldiers—black, if white were no longer available. In January, 1865, he urged the state of Virginia to enroll negroes, admitting that slavery must be given up. Congress dallied a month longer, when, at last, a bill for enlisting 200,000 blacks was introduced in the Senate. It was voted down by a large majority: R. M. T. Hunter was pronounced in his opposition.[2]

Lee, desperate for men, reiterated his request. Barksdale, the administration leader, thereupon offered in the House a bill for raising 300,000 negro troops which threw on the states the duty of supplying them and the onus of deciding whether they were to be free or not. Virginia had already decided to enlist negroes, and Congress followed its example.

[1] *Examiner*, November 11, 1864.
[2] *American Historical Review*, 18, 298.

Barksdale's bill became law on March 9, precisely a month before Lee's surrender. At that late date it was, of course, quite useless.

The effort to reënforce the army with blacks failed partly because it became involved with the congressional revolt against Davis. Congress was outraged because Hood remained in command of the Western army. A less thin-skinned man than Jefferson Davis would have removed Hood after the fall of Atlanta and replaced Johnston in command. But writhing under the public condemnation and maddened by the horrible results of his meddling, the President stubbornly clung to Hood with a king-can-do-no-wrong gesture. It was not loyalty to an incapable; it was not mere obstinacy aroused to fury by opposition; but it was the set purpose of pain, the resolution of the victim on the rack who sets his teeth and refuses to give way.

Davis was, indeed, stretched on the rack of a tough world. His credit was long since gone; he was assailed, denounced, or ignored. Gladstone made no more speeches hailing him the founder of a nation; his name was no longer coupled with Washington's. Nothing fails like failure. Malice domestic was added to the foreign levy of the enemy by the constant attacks made on him in Congress. Foote in the House and Wigfall in the Senate were his ever-active enemies. An action of the Virginia legislature quickened the congressional insurgency against the President. In January, 1865, the legislature ventured to ask Davis to appoint a commander in chief of the armies. This was a direct attack on the executive as military director. Davis met it with admirable self-control, replying that Lee had once been commander in chief (i.e., military adviser) and that he would be glad to appoint Lee to the position once more when prac-

ticable. The legislature, which aimed to have the military control taken from Davis's hands, not to have Lee made a sort of chief of staff, was nonplused.

Congress, however, now took up the gage. It passed a bill creating the office of commander in chief and called for the reinstatement of Johnston to the Western command. The Johnston resolution passed the Senate by a vote of 20 to 2; and the fact that the only two men voting against it were the dyed-in-the-wool administration supporters, Barnwell and Hill, shows how little strength the President had in Congress. The measure was nothing less than an effort to supersede him for all practical purposes, for military affairs were all that he had to handle now. Diplomacy, finance, everything else had gone by the board.

Davis parried the blow with great dexterity. He appointed Lee commander in chief and allowed him, in that capacity, to appoint Johnston to the Western army. Thus the President was spared the mortification of proclaiming his mistake to the world and reëlevating the man he hated. Moreover, he was still in control of the armies. Lee continued to act under him. The nation saw that the President had not been displaced. The revolution, from which for a moment much was expected, thus came to nothing. Lee refused to play his part in the comedy.

With the failure of Congress to overthrow Davis, the last hope of the Confederacy swiftly faded. The people would no longer support the government; the armies were wasting away and there were no recruits. A parliamentary system would have brought in a new government; but the rigid American system, which, in this case, imposed on the country a six-year executive, offered no relief. The ship of state was

sinking, but Jefferson Davis would walk the deck as captain until it took the final plunge.

Lee did not respond to the will of the people when Congress made him commander in chief. He insisted on remaining a subordinate, replying to Davis's message of appointment as follows: "I received your telegram announcing my confirmation by the Senate as general-in-chief of the Confederate States. I am indebted alone to the kindness of his Excellency the President for my nomination to this high and arduous office, and I wish I had the ability to fill it to advantage. As I have received no instructions as to my duties, I do not know what he desires me to undertake." [1] These are not the words of a Cæsarian state-saver.

It is possible that Lee made no effort to exercise his new powers because he felt it would be useless, though there are indications that he had a ray of hope as late as the opening weeks of 1865. He thought of abandoning Richmond and retreating southward to join forces with Johnston for an attack on Sherman. But the roads were very bad and Davis did not approve, and the plan was abandoned. It would have led to nothing, for Sherman was too strong to have been beaten by the combined wrecks of the two armies.

A result of the little revolution that saw Lee made generalissimo was the passing of Seddon. The valetudinarian had made an able war minister, but he had incurred great unpopularity in consenting to Johnston's removal and the Johnston party hated him. He fell as a result of a direct demand of Congress for the dismissal of all the cabinet members except Trenholm, Memminger's successor. Seddon resigned; the rest of the cabinet remained.[2]

[1] J. W. Jones, *Life and Letters of Lee*, 351.
[2] Schwab, 210.

The controversy between President and Congress continued through the remainder of the session. Bills were passed and freely vetoed. Haynes of Tennessee and Wigfall on the floor of the Senate charged Davis with being the cause of the national misfortunes: they called him "mediocre and malicious." The President responded by denouncing the action of Congress which had driven Seddon to resign as unconstitutional. Unconstitutional! Surely he had little sense of humor or he would not have echoed this cry which Stephens had worn out against himself! This talk of the constitution with the government literally tumbling down about his ears makes Davis seem almost as doctrinaire as the Vice President.

The cause was, indeed, at the last gasp. The Richmond of this period was interesting as the capital of a nation in process of dissolution. It was a City of Darkest Night. The crowded populace of maimed soldiers, refugees and hungry clerks passed wanly through the streets, seeking distraction from the misery of the situation. Food was scarce and sold for enormous sums of joke currency—$1,000 for a barrel of flour. Men wore faded clothes from the attic and women clad themselves in any makeshift that came handy. Yet with true Southern light-heartedness merriment continued, and girls in dresses made out of window curtains danced with lean and ragged officers and were happy in spite of everything. The men could not kill care so easily. They loafed in the numerous saloons and played in the gaudy faro palaces, where light and comfort and food were to be had in exchange for money so nearly worthless as to make the hospitality of the gambling hells seem a kind of charity. Such was the Confederacy in the last months of its existence.

XIV

CATASTROPHE

JEFFERSON DAVIS had shown that he was not a genius, but he was proving that he was a very brave man. Indeed, it is easy to see that he owed his preëminence to certain moral excellencies which often counterbalance a lack of great intellectual power. His was a high-strung, nervous courage that could not be daunted. He had a resolution that quailed at nothing; a self-confidence that seldom faltered; a dignity that rang true in spite of hatred and ridicule and disaster. Nature had played a trick on him, mingling with the scholar's fatal temperament the moral equipment of a hero. There was something very fine in his calm courage in that February and March of 1865 as he went out on his long daily rides with only an aide or two, seemingly as serene and confident as in the springtime of success, though his world was crumbling about him and he knew that he was ringed around with hate. Once an assassin had fired at him, but he scorned precautions—perhaps would have been relieved if death had found him. If perishing were the order of the day, he would perish like a gentleman, quietly and with a certain proud detachment.

It had come to this that the Confederacy was now a shattered hull about to dissolve into nothingness: the Nordic empire in the tropics was only a fading dreamland. The great experiment was at an end. Those final weeks of hope-

less waiting were terrible to Jefferson Davis, for he had nothing to do but deliberate on the past. Opportunities lost forever haunted him; the worm within tormented him while the external world frowned on him. It was a far cry from 1861, when men called him a genius, to 1865, when they sneered at him as "mediocre." This was the hardest thing to bear, this disesteem that was scarcely even ridicule. Death would have meant little to him, for he had no physical fear, but it tortured him to stand before the world as an intellectual failure—as a man who could not succeed in a mighty enterprise. In this last period he spent his time fumbling over papers, busy about nothing, seeking to kill thought.

The final act of the tragedy was at hand. Seddon had been succeeded by John C. Breckinridge, who worked with great energy and success to collect provisions. Contrary to popular conceptions, the South was far from having exhausted the food supply, and the stations on the railroad from North Carolina to Virginia were piled with tons of provisions. Actually, the Confederate army had more food in its depots at the last than at almost any other period of the war. The troops starved in the trenches at Petersburg and on the way to Appomattox, but mainly because of lack of transportation, certainly not from lack of supplies.

In February and March, 1865, Lee's army gradually broke up. The men deserted by hundreds and there were no newcomers to take their places. A few thousand heroic souls remained with the colors and contemplated cheerfully the beginning of a new campaign against an overwhelming enemy. But for Lee's vast popularity the end would have come sooner than it did. Lee himself could not change the logic of the hopeless situation or give popularity and strength to a crumbling government.

Springtime, time of resurrection, saw the death of the Confederacy. On the first of April, Grant broke Lee's attenuated lines at Five Forks, and the long defense of Richmond ended. Lee retreated westward after notifying Davis that the city must fall.

The President was in church on the morning of Sunday, April 2, when the messenger came with Lee's telegram. Ashy pale but composed, the fallen ruler left the church in order to prepare for flight. Anticipating the calamity, he had shipped off his family some days before. Late that afternoon a train bumped its way southward over the decaying roadbed, carrying the Confederate government and archives. The warehouses, full of clothing never issued to the naked troops, were set on fire, and in the confusion a great part of the town burned.

On April 9, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox. Lee went to meet Grant clothed in his best uniform and wearing his dress sword—tall, handsome, immaculate. Grant was small, shy, rusty, unimpressive.

Grant must have thought of their very different lives as he talked with his great opponent. He had had no place in the sun like Lee: life had given him little and had almost taken that away. He had been a man of imagination in an alien environment; he had sought to break the monotony with drink; he had left the army for civilian life, for which a nature guilelessly honest and singularly unpretending unfitted him. He had brooded and dreamed, little thinking that the dreams would come true. Then the war had given him his chance, and the proclaimed failure—as if in mockery on men's judgments—had overthrown the Confederacy and saved the Union. The great Illinoisian has been much written about but little understood. He was in reality an in-

articulate imaginer, a poet who wrote epics in blood. Action was his sphere, not words; and in mighty action he has been surpassed by no one in our history.

The four great steps in his career were the four acts of the South's downfall. At Fort Donelson he gained the first great victory for the Union. At Vicksburg he won the whole Mississippi Valley and divided the Confederacy. At Missionary Ridge he decided the war in the West and paved the way for Sherman's march. At Appomattox he brought the war itself to an end. All of his enterprises were attended with that completeness of success which is the mark of greatness. While Grant was not the master of the art of commanding a single army that Lee was, since with an enormous superiority of force he held his own against Lee only with great difficulty, yet in that field in which wars are won and lost—that of grand strategy—no American general approaches him. He had the vast imagination that surveys a whole country and combines the movements of many armies for some great common object, together with the practical judgment that crowns imagination with success. It is not too much to say that he won the war for the Union. We cannot imagine McClellan or Rosecrans or even Sherman as ever breaking down the powerful resistance of the South. The task demanded the keen insight and the immense will of Grant. But for him the Confederacy would probably have succeeded in spite of every handicap.

Even yet, after Lee's surrender, Jefferson Davis did not absolutely despair. He was not the kind of man that yields to circumstances while the remotest possibility of resistance remains. He would have gone on with the war if he had found men willing to follow him. He dreamed of reaching Texas, still unconquered, and holding out in that distant

region. But the dream faded before the unmistakable reality that the war was over since the people had accepted Lee's surrender as conclusive. Presently Johnston, in North Carolina, surrendered the shadow of the Western army.

Davis, now abandoning the thought of further resistance, wandered into Georgia in the hope of escape abroad. At one wayside cabin where he received hospitality he gave his last money, a gold piece, to a child named after him just as he had been named after Jefferson. He had nothing left: he was ruined. Brierfield had been devastated long before by Union patriots. Yet penniless, a fugitive with a price on him, the epic failure of the age, he lost none of his courage or dignity. The worst blows of fortune could not break his spirit or diminish his manhood. In spite of all his faults, he was a great man.

At length he was captured by a force of cavalry and brought to Fort Monroe by water. On the same steamer with him was Alexander H. Stephens, who had tried him as sorely as one man may try another. He held no parley with the ex-Vice President but met him with a quiet courtesy worthy of a king fallen on evil days.

Davis was imprisoned at Fort Monroe with some circumstances of severity. He was kept in a damp casemate and actually manacled. This martyrdom worked to his benefit. The irons he wore for the South restored his popularity or, rather, gave him a popularity he had never had before. Men forgot his failure in sympathy for his in some part vicarious sufferings. Furthermore, the United States government eased the feelings of the mob that was clamoring for blood with the picture of the fallen President in chains. At the first moment practicable he was released. The government made a show of bringing him to trial, but it was only a

gesture, and the proceedings against him were finally dismissed, to the general relief. It was well. There would have been a blot on our history if the Southern chieftain had been tried for being faithful to the South. The government acted moderately in its treatment of Jefferson Davis. It could not have well done less than it did, considering the terrible passions that had been aroused by the war; it was supremely wise in that it did not do more.

XV

WHY THE CONFEDERACY FAILED

THE fall of the Confederacy has been attributed to many causes, all of them having some measure of truth. But nearly all of these are contributing and not determining causes; and when a great political movement fails it usually does so for some one outstanding reason. A difference in one important factor often spells the difference between victory and defeat.

The failure of the South has been frequently set down to the blockade. This is negatively true, in so much that the South would have won if there had been no blockade, because then it would have had wealth and, with wealth, ample supplies and recruits. The Confederacy could never have been conquered if its ports had remained open to the world. Still as the South might have won in spite of the blockade—as the blockade was, to a certain extent, eluded—this cannot be considered as the predominating influence that turned the war one way instead of the other.

The dearth of food has been thought by some to be the main cause of the breakdown. The Southern armies suffered from a shortage of provisions almost through the entire war. At times they were practically without meat rations and reduced to corn meal. Yet as the health of the troops was good and they were able to perform great feats of exertion in marching and fighting, it is not likely that food

shortage was a decisive factor except in so far as it led Lee to make the invasion of Pennsylvania. Food did not win or lose the war.

Inferior military equipment has been assigned as a principal cause of failure. If the Confederacy had ended in 1862, this diagnosis would have been right. But in 1863 the Southern troops were relatively well armed and in 1864 much more so. In arms and ammunition, they were not, after the first period, much inferior to the Unionists and were actually sometimes superior. So this explanation can be set aside.

The failure of the government to secure its currency and lay up a credit abroad by exporting cotton early in the war is frequently advanced as the main reason for defeat. There is more truth in this than in the foregoing allegations. The Confederate government was terribly hampered by lack of money through the entire war, both at home and abroad. If it had had money, it might have bought a navy at the beginning of the struggle, obtained arms and ammunition in any quantity and procured friends. Yet without money the Confederacy managed to do so much that it is not likely that finance was the determining factor.

Some men have believed that the lack of mechanical equipment—of railways and railway repairs, factories, mines and mills—led to the downfall of the South. It is true that the agricultural Confederacy was terribly handicapped by its industrial poverty, especially its want of metal works. The railroads deteriorated year after year, and there was a painful scarcity of iron. Yet even this great deficiency was partly overcome, and might have been remedied in a far larger degree if the government had been more enterprising. The South was manufacturing many things by 1863—cloth-

ing,[1] shoes, munitions, rifles, cannon, leather goods—and iron and coal mines were worked on a considerable scale. The railroads, while always on the point of breaking down, never broke down, and under better governmental direction might have done much more. They were capable of transporting quantities of supplies and large bodies of troops through the entire war. Thus, while the mechanical equipment of the South was deficient, transportation continued and might have gone on for some time longer.

Fewness of soldiers is one of the most popular reasons advanced for the defeat of the South. The Southern armies were nearly always outnumbered, sometimes decisively so. They contained in all about 800,000 men; the Union armies three times as many. At the end of 1864, there were not many more than 100,000 men in all the Confederate armies. If the South had had larger forces in 1863 and 1864, the outcome of events would probably have been very different. Insufficient cannon food was undoubtedly one of the main reasons for the collapse of the Confederacy.

Yet it was not absolutely determining. The Southern troops were nearly all Americans; many of the Unionists were foreigners. And if the South was so heavily outnumbered, this was partly the fault of the government, which feared to utilize negroes for military purposes. With blacks, the South might have put into the field more than a million men: it actually had about 800,000. The Union found such difficulty in breaking down the resistance of the Confederacy and was in such straits for recruits in 1864 that it seems probable that the Southern forces, if properly handled, would have been sufficient to win the war. It takes far greater numbers to invade than to defend, and the North was called

[1] *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 8, 231-249.

on to invade a country subtropical in character, abounding in streams and swamps and offering many advantages to the defense. If it had not been for the great rivers, which gave easy access to the interior at many points, it is not likely that the North would ever have conquered.

The Southern forces were large enough to support the war for four years. Were they large enough to have won the war? Probably, if handled as a unit. Handled piecemeal and wastefully, they were insufficient, and that is why the Confederacy fell. The main cause of the disaster was strategic, though there were a number of powerful contributing causes.

The armies were not directed with a common purpose: no strategic system was ever devised by the South. The North had two great strategic ideas—the one originated by Halleck, the other by Grant. Halleck is a man to whom history has not done justice; he had much to do with the Union success. The North, in making the Mississippi Valley the main front of the struggle, was strategically right. Not by winning battles but by taking New Orleans and Vicksburg, the Union won the war. It could afford to lose battles in Virginia while conquering the West. Then, when the main conflict had been won, the Union armies, East and West, concentrated on Lee and brought the struggle to a close. The South was frequently better in the strategy of single campaigns than the North—thus Lee was notably abler than the generals who opposed him—but it had no grand strategy, and wars are more often won by grand strategy than single battles. In the last analysis, the Union triumphed less because of large numbers, more food, money and equipment and its navy than because it had a strategic system it was able to carry out.

The South had two strategic opportunities. At the beginning of the war, having better raw troops than the adversary, the South might have invaded the North after the First Manassas with excellent prospects of success. The fall of Washington would probably have been followed by the secession of all the border states. In that case, the South would have triumphed. Jefferson Davis's caution and his mingling of political calculations with military plans lost this opportunity. He would not take the risk of invading the North when it seemed likely that Europe would intervene in favor of the Confederacy. He thought that the cotton shortage would make military aggression needless.

This opportunity for the offensive was based on the North's unreadiness for war in 1861. By the spring of 1862, the Union had adapted its industrial system to war and was prepared for the struggle. Consequently, the strategic opportunity of the South passed from the offensive to the defensive: its hope of success lay in wearing out the North in a protracted struggle. If the armies of the Union were defeated in their efforts to penetrate the South, the time must come when the Northern public would refuse to continue to support the necessary sacrifices or Europe might really intervene. This was the chance of the South after the beginning of 1862, and it was a good chance.

The Confederate defense in the East was successfully maintained by Lee's victories in the summer of 1862, though the moment that he ventured on the offensive with his small army he was foiled at Sharpsburg. All he could reasonably hope to do was to hold the line of the Rappahannock River, a terrible obstacle for the Union army to pass. Lee's victories had the result of making the outcome of the war,

which in February, 1862, seemed dark for the South, doubtful, with the chances favoring the Confederacy.

If the Confederates had been able to do as well in the West, the war would have been won by 1864 or 1865—1866 at the latest. But from the first things went badly for the Confederacy in the Mississippi Valley. Fort Donelson, Shiloh and New Orleans gave the North an ascendency in the West that was never lost. By the midsummer of 1862, the South had lost the whole Mississippi River with the exception of the segment between Vicksburg and Port Hudson. Then came the battle of Murfreesboro, and by the beginning of 1863 the Union had almost won the war on the most important front.

Yet Lee's brilliant triumph at Chancellorsville imperiled the Union anew, because it gave the Confederacy the means to bolster the defense in the West and, by striking at Grant, the chance to win a decisive victory. However, because the South had no strategic system, because all its operations were separate and unrelated, Lee saw the problem only in the light of his own situation. He decided on the offensive with means too small at the very moment that the Western defense was breaking down, and Gettysburg and Vicksburg followed. Then came the long last agony, which Davis and Bragg, perhaps mercifully, shortened by gambling away the army of Tennessee in attacking Sherman. Such in brief is the sad story of the Confederacy.

Why was it that the South had no adequate strategic system? Mainly because there was no unity of control and no central military body corresponding to a general staff. This disunity of control was due to the fact that Jefferson Davis directed the war and yet did not direct it fully. He left large powers to the generals and yet wished to hold the

reins. The best military movement of the government was made at the close of 1862, when Joseph E. Johnston was assigned to the headship of the main Western department with large powers. Lee exercised somewhat similar control in the East. Yet this system failed, partly because there was no coöperation between East and West. If any one man had been in control of all the Confederate forces in 1863, the Pennsylvania campaign would never have occurred. Vicksburg would have been relieved. A fatal strategic mistake would have been avoided.

In this matter of military direction, Jefferson Davis committed his greatest error. He was a man of much more military talent than he has been given credit for, but he was not a great staff officer and in no position to become one. The successful conduct of the war called for all the ability and all the energy of some one directing mind. That mind could not, by any chance, be Jefferson Davis, because he was President. As President, he had engrossing political and administrative concerns. His cares and distractions were legion.

Yet Davis thought that he could be President and still direct the war, and because he made this mistake he failed. Since the constitution gave him the powers of commander in chief, he thought that he must exercise them. Educated a soldier, he felt that he must play a soldier's part in the war. He was not prepared to delegate the control of the armies to another. Yet that was the thing needed. A heaven-sent man appeared in Lee; Congress would gladly have made him commander in chief. Here was the soldier to win the war.

If Lee had been made head of all the armies in the autumn of 1862, he would have shaken himself out of the semi-lethargy that claimed him, the result of years of service as

a routine officer. He would have exerted his great powers, never fully tested until 1864, at a much earlier period of the struggle and probably with very important results. His eminent strategic gifts would have bloomed in the full light of responsibility. He would have seen the war as a whole instead of in part. He would have looked out for the West as much as for the East. Finally, he would have carried out the true strategic policy of the South—the maintenance of the defense along the interior lines of communication. Troops would have been shifted East or West along the railroads as they were needed, instead of having superfluity in one place and scarcity in another. Vicksburg would have been saved, and the campaign of 1863 would probably have ended in Union failure instead of Union success. There would have been a vast difference between Lee, the commander in chief, with Jackson at the head of one of the armies, and Lee, the commander of the army of Virginia, brilliantly successful in his own field but unable to help elsewhere. The prospects of the Confederacy would have been immeasurably improved.

What would Jefferson Davis have done if he had delegated the management of the armies to another? The proper work of a President, which is not military detail. Surely he had burdens enough without saddling himself with the conducting of military movements! The revolutionary and experimental character of the Confederate government threw unusual responsibilities on its head. Old governments run partly by mere momentum; people obey them from habit. A new government makes special demands on the ruler's qualities of leadership. A revolutionary ruler must inspire and persuade his people. But Jefferson Davis had a feeling that he was the head of a long-established government

and so he made no effort until late in the war to win the people.

Jefferson Davis chose military administration as his particular province, though he gave much attention to other matters, too. Foreign affairs, the control of Congress, departmental concerns took up much of his time and attention. The result was that important duties were frequently left to subordinates, often not with happy results. Sometimes the choice of subordinates was unfortunate, though Jefferson Davis was, ordinarily, a good judge of men. Out of many candidates, Lee was selected as the head of the army of Virginia, the best possible selection. No better choice could have been made than that of Benjamin for foreign affairs—only Benjamin was not sent abroad. Seddon was probably the best Secretary of War Davis could have named from the limited field of possibilities. Johnston was a soldier of great ability if of small enterprise. True, Bragg and Pemberton were failures, but, contrary to the general impression, Hood was not such a mistake as he seems. Davis deliberately took Hood because he wanted a fight, and Hood fought. The error lay in the impression, created and fostered by Bragg for months, that the army of Tennessee was strong enough to beat Sherman. It was not, and any general who essayed Hood's task, under the conditions imposed on him, would have failed in much the same way. As an envoy, Slidell was an admirable choice, as was Raphael Semmes as a commerce destroyer.

The most criticized of Davis's appointments, not even excepting Pemberton and Hood, was Colonel L. B. Northrop, Commissary-General or Chief of the Bureau of Subsistence. It must be admitted that Northrop was anything but a success, but the difficulties under which he labored

were very great. It was a position that would have taxed the peculiar talents of Herbert Hoover. Northrop was an old army officer, a rather crusty routine executive. He became intensely unpopular because his agents, under the law and the necessity of the hour, seized food on purely nominal payments. Better men might have been found for the place, and worse. Northrop had some energy and collected large quantities of supplies according to a fairly good system.

Early in the war, however, the Bureau of Subsistence was embarrassed by coming into conflict with the chief commissaries of the various armies. Bureau agents and army commissaries bid against each other to obtain foodstuffs. Such rivalry created bad feeling and made coöperation of the agencies employed in obtaining provisions impossible.

This unfortunate situation was partly remedied by an entire change in commissary methods. The country was divided into eleven districts, including Kentucky, usually following state lines. A head commissary was appointed for each district, with full power over his subordinates. The army commissaries were forbidden to compete with the state commissaries, which had right of way. The result of this more efficient regulation was that supplies were more easily collected in the latter part of the war than at first.

But for the failure of the railways, food would have been more abundant in 1864 than in 1862. Farmers in the lower South were planting grain on a larger scale at the close of the war. The lower South, in 1861 as in 1917, raised cotton and almost nothing else. The Confederate armies in 1861 and 1862 relied for food on Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. But as the war continued and the blockade made cotton-raising useless, less cotton was raised and more corn

and meat. In 1863, Mississippi had a surplus of food, and indeed the South generally, for the crops that year were good. In 1864, Sherman found such abundance in Georgia that his men lived on the country and destroyed enormous quantities of farm products besides. At the beginning of the campaign of 1865, the magazines held more food probably than at any previous period of the war. All through the struggle, large quantities of provisions were captured by the enemy or destroyed to prevent capture.

It was recognized at the opening of 1863 that the food problem was really one of transportation. Much food was being gathered in the depots, but these were scattered over the country at long distances apart. The railways had difficulty in bringing provisions hundreds of miles to the armies. There was never enough food (and enough transportation to carry sufficient supplies to the armies) to last any length of time; and, besides, the armies were often on the move. The Union forces usually relied on water transportation to a large extent and thus had a great advantage over the Confederates, who were frequently forced to carry foodstuffs for long distances by wagon. Thus the base of supplies for the Union armies operating in Virginia was the Potomac, York or Rappahannock River, as the case might be, while Lee's base, when he invaded Pennsylvania, was Staunton, in the Valley of Virginia, which meant that his line of communications was long and open to attack. The limitation to inland bases and wagon transportation in many instances kept the Southern forces insufficiently provisioned.

Yet that in a country so large and fertile as the South, with such a population of laborers, the armies starved all through the war demands some further explanation. The truth is that the government's lack of money was one reason

of the food shortage. Foodstuffs were impressed, either by means of the tax on farm products or by simple seizure on payment in paper money. As the prices in paper money were so small as to be negligible, it came to this that the Southern people practically supported the armies without recompense. The people were exceedingly patriotic, but it is not in human nature to exert one's self strenuously for no return. Thus many plantations lay fallow and numbers of slaves idled.

Jefferson Davis paid very little attention to the question of food. He left it at the beginning almost entirely to Northrop. Seddon, when he became Secretary of War, gave much thought to the commissary and to the related transportation problem. In March, 1863, and again later in the year, he summoned the railroad presidents of the country to Richmond to confer with him. It was his idea to put all the railways under the control of a single official, who would have corresponded to William McAdoo in 1917. A military officer did exercise a sort of supervision of the railroads, but he lacked the power to do much: Seddon aimed at efficient control. The plan was eminently wise, and if it had been carried out the food supply of the army must have been greatly enlarged. Davis, however, refused to support the Secretary of War in the measure, which accordingly came to nothing.

The result was that transportation remained in a state of confusion until the end of the war. Ordinarily, the railways were run as nearly as possible in normal peace fashion, with little care for the military service. At intervals, dependent on military operations, the army leaders interfered drastically, upsetting all system. Cars and engines were taken from one road to another, often without the knowledge of

the owners, and never returned. As railways received little aid from the government, they were all in a bankrupt condition. Dividends were unheard of. There was no money to maintain roadbeds and equipment and there were no mechanics to hire.

The railroads should have been one of Jefferson Davis's prime concerns. It was not from ignorance of the importance of railways that he neglected them, because they were his particular hobby, but from lack of time. Absorbed in military and political affairs, he could not give himself to great administrative questions; and these matters had much to do with breaking down the Confederacy, even if they were not decisive. Seddon seems to have considered the general supervision of the commissary and of transportation as within his province, and the President did not oppose him though often he failed to give him proper support.

Davis seems to have left the navy largely to Mallory, in spite of the fact that he was interested in it and gave it more time than many other matters. Mallory was one of the most generally disliked officials in the government, but he was, in reality, a man of ability and initiative. Without navy yards, without materials and without seamen, the South showed wonderful resourcefulness on the water, and some of the credit certainly attaches to Mallory. In spite of every disadvantage under which it is possible to labor, the Confederates had an ironclad ready before the Unionists, and the *Merrimac* played havoc with the wooden sailing ships of the North. In the West, the Confederates built rams which were usually burned before completion but which on several occasions won impressive victories over Union fleets. The Southerners launched the first workable submarine and blew up the first ship sunk by a torpedo. In

fact, they made the torpedo an instrument of marine warfare. This is a very creditable list of achievements.

The ordnance department was under Josiah Gorgas, the best selection that could have been made. The man was a genius, as his son was after him. He manufactured excellent cannon. The Confederate chemists showed great ingenuity in securing explosive materials. Davis, as a soldier, took much interest in ordnance and rifle manufacture. The country was terribly handicapped by the lack of small arms in 1861 and 1862; but this deficiency was overcome by energy and resourcefulness. Large quantities of Enfield rifles were imported and manufactured, and Pemberton's infantry was better armed at Vicksburg than Grant's. Indeed, when we consider the difference between the resources of the Union and those of the Confederacy—the world-wide opportunities of the one and the narrow limitations of the other—we must concede that in some respects the Southern government was more alert than the Northern.

All this goes to show that the Confederate government would have been immeasurably more efficient if Jefferson Davis had left troop movements and military operations to the generals and devoted himself strictly to administration. Much doubt has been cast on his executive ability, but largely because of the many things he was forced to neglect in order to devote himself to the conduct of the war. As a matter of fact, he seems not to have been wanting in capacity as an administrator. His plantation was a model and he made a great record as a Secretary of War. But nothing is more exacting than administration, and Davis was hampered by his various interests and his ill health, the result of overwork and worry. He was in a state of nerve depletion through the entire

war. His efficiency was much lessened by this condition of nervous prostration. Yet in spite of weak nerves he managed to do a great deal of work. Hardly a detail of army administration, outside of the commissary and quartermaster departments, escaped his notice. He seems to have passed personally on every commission issued. He was in constant correspondence with all the departmental commanders and with other officers. He carefully scrutinized the details of every campaign and seems to have known the disposition of all the military forces in the country. The pity is that he did all this. Spending his hours in industriously supervising the military routine, he neglected those other factors that no revolutionary leader can afford to overlook.

In fact, the greatest of Jefferson Davis's sins of omission was his failure to realize that he was a revolutionary chief. He looked on himself as a constitutional ruler, forgetful of the fact that the government had first to win independence. He was careful to obey the laws himself and he bitterly resented any invasion of his prerogatives. He was jealous of his authority. His pride led him to imagine that he could deal on equal terms with foreign nations; he did not realize that he was a suppliant kneeling at the feet of thrones. Suppliants bring propitiatory gifts, but Jefferson Davis had no definite offers to make. He impatiently awaited recognition, feeling that he was suffering an injustice; he counted on the cotton famine to force intervention. He might possibly have obtained recognition and intervention if he had paid the price and subordinated the Confederacy to England; but he was too proud or too patriotic to do this. Maybe Davis preferred to risk conquest by the Union to making an American country a European vassal. At least, he made

no effort to gain support in the one way in which it might have been secured.

Under these circumstances, it is not likely that Jefferson Davis could have accomplished anything more in the field of diplomacy than he did. He had two very able diplomats in Benjamin and Slidell, and they failed. Mason, who was less able, also failed, but he would have done little more if he had been abler. Without the means of making advantageous proposals to Europe and with little money, the Southern envoys did about as much as they could have been expected to do.

In domestic politics the situation was different. There much was to be gained by skill and address. Yet Davis made no serious effort in the field of home politics because he thought that his position was secure, when, in reality, it was to be made. A mere election to the presidency could not insure him the support of the public. He had to win it, but he did not win it. What the South longed for and never found—what would have gone a long way toward the winning of the war—was a national leader. Lincoln was such a leader in the North, but Davis was not in the South. He was a President, a ruler, a director of armies and generals, but not the real head of a country—not a beloved and heroic figure.

At first he had some hold on the popular imagination, when he seemed to be the man of destiny and the organizer of victory. This passed in 1863, with defeat. He was never really popular at any time; he was never close to any class in the country. He successively alienated every class. The planter politicians early turned against him because they disliked his masterful ways. His ways were masterful, partly because he was too busy and too nervous to play

the courtier. Toombs, Stephens, Wigfall, Rhett, Yancey—all hated him. They accordingly tended, especially Stephens, to play the part of tribunes opposing an attempted dictator. Cobb, Barnwell, Hunter and Hill were on his side, but love is a feeble passion compared with hate. And, indeed, of these friends, Cobb and Barnwell were the only disinterested ones. Hill was a politician instinctively deferential to the fountain of patronage; Hunter was an aspirant for the presidency in that next election that never came.

The rank and file of congressmen were overawed by Davis, whose strength of will and grim tongue daunted them, but they never liked him. They were never his friends. They unwillingly followed him so long as he was successful and readily turned against him when his mistakes became scandals. They warred with him through the last days of the Confederacy.

The masses admired Davis as a strong man and a great orator, but they did not love him. Few politicians have ever risen so high with so little public favor. The people do not like a politician the less for being proud, but they want him to unbend to them. It tickles them to be courted by the great. Jefferson Davis expended no time and effort on courting the people until the military situation became ominous. But then the people understood too well why he relaxed his ramrod spine.

Jefferson Davis might have won some favor if he had seemed to bow to the popular will. But with the perversity of a believer in the divine right of constitutions, with nerves exasperated almost beyond control by labor and anxiety, he actually appeared to go out of his way to defy public opinion. It was insanity for a man in his position to stand on constitutional rights: what were they to the enemy? He ventured

to retain Bragg at the head of the Western army when the soldiers and the populace demanded in no uncertain terms his removal. Not until it became evident that the army would no longer fight under Bragg was that officer relieved, and he was then nominally promoted.

This question of the leadership of the armies became the one political issue in the Confederacy. Davis accepted it as such. The public backed Johnston and Johnston's military policy. Davis's mind was clouded with passion as he saw civilians request him to put Forrest on Sherman's communications—that is, presume to dictate to him, the President, in regard to military matters! His dislike and distrust of Johnston, who was eagerly upheld by Bragg's enemies and critics, together with Bragg's continual misrepresentations, led him to remove the former and stake everything on the issue of battle. If victory had resulted, Davis would have been vindicated. But defeat followed defeat without intermission until the army was destroyed; and with the ruin of the army of Tennessee, the last of Jefferson Davis's credit with the public disappeared. In the final months of the Confederacy, the Johnston party forced the restoration to command of their idol, though Lee took the step, not Davis.

Johnston's return to the shattered hull of the Army of Tennessee was a defeat for Davis of the first magnitude; it was the beginning of a movement intended to eliminate the President. The next step was to make Lee commander in chief and take the management of the armies entirely out of Davis's hands. Lee's refusal to make use of the power that Congress intended him to exert wrecked the revolution and brought the Confederacy to a somewhat premature end. The South had soldiers and means enough to have resisted considerably longer if the people had still willed to resist.

But the public had utterly lost confidence in the government, which Congress did not have the courage to overthrow. Davis was deeply and generally disliked. The soldiers, resentful at the government and fearful for their families, deserted in such numbers that Lee could no longer hold his lines. This need not be regretted: it was, indeed, a fortunate circumstance. If Jefferson Davis had been beloved, if he had issued a call that would have gone to the popular heart, a guerrilla warfare might have followed that would have devastated the South far more than any regular military operations. As it was, the people were so weary of the government that, when it appeared that the war was lost, they ceased all resistance. Peace came suddenly and completely.

Jefferson Davis was a great man who made great mistakes. His mistakes ruined him, but they could not keep him from being great. He put up an astonishing fight against heavy odds; he showed much energy and resourcefulness in a situation of extreme difficulty. Under him a purely agricultural community held out long, and almost successfully, in the game of modern war against one of the greatest industrial countries of the world. In daring to draft the population of the free South for the army he showed initiative and true courage: it was the act of a strong man. He made war honorably, and his integrity and manhood cast credit on the South.

His failure was more that of temperament than of brain. The spirit, indeed, was strong but the flesh weak. His intelligence and courage were largely neutralized by his sensitive scholar's nature; he had the faults of hypochondria highly developed. He was jealous of his prerogatives, not self-effacing. Thus he missed the way to win the war. Censure was torment to him. It tended to develop in him

the vice of obstinacy. He was resolved not to be dictated to, forgetful that the head of a republic cannot openly oppose the popular will: for him, *vox populi* must be *vox Dei*. Above all, Jefferson Davis could not conquer his aversions. His likes and dislikes were too pronounced. A straightforward, honorable, courageous gentleman, he battled with a task that was too mighty for him because it demanded qualities he did not have. He lacked tact, policy, understanding of the man in the street, good humor amid annoyances, the power to win and hold men. But his greatest lack was that of self-renunciation. He could not bring himself to step aside and put the conduct of military operations in the hands of a single soldier, reserving for himself the rôle of lending support. If he had done so, and if Lee had been the chosen generalissimo, it is probable that the Confederacy would have succeeded. It failed, but it came so near success as to make evident the fine qualities and high resolution of the man into whose hands were committed the destinies of the South on that February day of 1861. Jefferson Davis was a great man, even if he was not great enough to triumph.

XVI

THE MORAL

WHAT boots it to speak of what Jefferson Davis did or did not do after 1865? That was the death of his soul: does it matter that, more unconscionable than Charles II, he was a quarter of a century in physically dying? Like most neurotics, he had a strong constitution, and four years of intense anxiety hurt him but little. Always sick, he did not die, and he might have lived many years longer if an inconvenient cold had not carried him off at last at a moderate old age. He altered greatly in his last years. The hawklike face of the Nordic leader became venerable and benevolent, making him resemble a meditative clergyman. It bore no trace of the earlier fires.

Having no money at the close of the war, Jefferson Davis went into business. He managed to get along—little more. It was not to be expected that a man who had endured the fierce light that beats more strongly even on Presidents than kings would make a good routine business man, and he did not. Some of his enterprises failed sadly. Yet great historic figures seldom starve, and Jefferson Davis was no exception. His last years were fairly free from financial worry.

Davis spent two years, from 1865 to 1867, in prison, a part of the time in chains. This was a fortunate indignity for him. Intensely unpopular in the South when the Confederacy collapsed, he gained sympathy as a post-war suf-

ferer for the cause. The South forgot his faults and his mistakes and only remembered that though he was not primarily responsible for secession he was a martyr for the principle of secession. The Union government could not have let him go at large immediately. It would have preferred his escape abroad, but it could not rebuke the overzealous cavalrymen who captured him.

It did not try him: it did not want to try him. He was no longer dangerous; his blood would do nobody any good. Besides, a trial must have aired constitutional principles, and in court the Union might not have come off so well as on the battlefield. Davis's lawyers were ready, and they might have come uncomfortably near proving that secession was legal, whatever it might be otherwise. So Jefferson Davis was released on bond and was never molested again by the United States government. His principal achievement in later life was his memoir of the war, which, as Gamaliel Bradford points out, tells us everything we are not interested in and carefully avoids the things we wish to know. It is the book of a man who has put off writing too long.

Before he died Jefferson Davis had the satisfaction of seeing the South well started on the road to material recovery. The Reconstruction was over, and out of that epic struggle the white race had emerged scarred but victorious. Perhaps Davis, in his inmost soul, may have believed that it was better that he failed. He was not bitter or depressed: what was far better, he was not resigned. He seems to have been rather happy. His conscience was perfectly clear and he was gratified to find that the popularity which had been denied him in his active life was abundantly his. Everywhere he went in the South he was greeted with marks o

affection. He was the President of the South. It was by no means a forlorn glory.

What shall we say of him now after this long time? The South respects him but it is almost glad that he was not quite great enough to succeed. The South is well satisfied to be a part of the Union. It still differs politically from the North, but this difference is more the result of habit and tradition than of thought. The South maintains, as it should, that secession was justified and that Jefferson Davis was right, but it feels that out of the evil of defeat and political overthrow Providence has brought good. What happened happened for the best. The Southern mood is wholly optimistic.

Yet we are just beginning to see the significance of the Civil War. Our mood has been, perhaps, too optimistic. The defeat of disunion and the overthrow of slavery seemed unmitigated benefits. Davis and Lee have been pictured as noble—as they were—but as mistaken, as possibly they were not. The Civil War is coming under the ken of the New History, and Madison Grant's tone is not one altogether of congratulation. He plainly doubts.

The truth is that the Confederacy was a milestone on the progress of the Nordic race to nothingness. It was a Nordic protest against a leveling age, against the principle of leveling. There was democracy in the South, but it was the democracy of conquerors. There was no brotherhood with the weak. The South discovered democracy and repudiated it. The inequality of races was its creed, though it worshiped the Moses who proclaimed equality. Democracy withered in the South, not so much because the South was slaveholding as because it was Nordic. This is the fact the world does not understand. If the South had not been Nor-

dic, democracy would have made it free the slaves. If democracy had suited the genius of the South, slavery would not have lasted. Because slavery suited the genius of the South it lasted. The South is responsible for slavery rather than slavery for the South. Slavery was a result, not a cause.

Slavery endured because it was the natural relation between Nordic master and African man. Slavery *de facto* survived the war, though slavery *de lege* expired. Slavery outlasted the war a generation, only the slaves were rebellious, seeking to put themselves on top. The blacks were slaves, in that they looked on themselves as slaves and on the whites as masters. Slavery survived war, reconstruction, humanitarianism, democratic propaganda—everything, until industrialism came to the South. Then it died. Economic forces accomplished what Christian religion and rationalistic philosophy, working together, could not do. When the blacks became factory hands and mill workers alongside white men, they ceased to be slaves and became a part of the great industrial class.

It is because Nordicism is dying and non-Nordicism triumphant that slavery is dead. The Civil War, as has been said before, was in essence a conflict between Nordic and non-Nordic principles: between individualism and communism; between agriculture and industrialism; between democracy and aristocracy; between the world order of the past and that of the future.

All this should be taken into consideration in passing moral judgments on the Civil War. At first sight it might seem that the North was right, at least that it had the better side. The Northern idealists were splendid men: liberty, equality, fraternity—without distinction of races—are high

and generous things. Against them stands the race instinct for which the South fought. The South fought for the race which has made the world what it is, for the agricultural organization of life, for political conservatism, for social order. And it is fair to ask the question whether, in the last analysis, such things may not be better than the championship of humanity and the propagation of democracy. Between the two groups of Nordics fighting a mighty fight was this difference—that one fought for the Nordic race, the other against it. The victory of the North meant the predominance of the non-Nordic elements in American life. It meant the freeing of the slave, the trampling of agriculture by industrialism, the rise of labor to be a great power, the overthrow of individualism. This consideration should teach us the good and evil on both sides in the Civil War. We should no longer look on Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee as good but mistaken men: we should see that they may not have been mistaken at all—that the mistake may have been on the other side. But this is a question that cannot be answered even now, but in the future.

The chief result of the Civil War was the ruin it brought on the Nordic race in America. The Nordic empire of the tropics was now a vanished bubble. The Nordic population of the South was decimated: the best of a generation were destroyed. The war also took a terrible toll of the Northern Nordics, who filled the armies while the non-Nordics mainly stayed at home and prospered. The North, which was still largely Nordic before the war, had altogether altered by its close.

In the more than half century since the great struggle, immigration has swamped the Nordic race in America. The New England of to-day, for instance, contains a thin Nordic

upper class and a mass of factory workers of almost wholly non-Nordic stock. There are cities of non-Nordics surrounded by Nordic farmers. The Nordic element in our population is constantly decreasing in proportion to the non-Nordic, and if it were not for the still mainly Nordic South the United States would represent a racial revolution. It would be the story of the supplanting of one race by another. But so long as the South remains Nordic the old America is still with us.

Yet the South is changing, and the time must come when it, like the rest of the country, will be largely non-Nordic. This transformation will be attended by tremendous consequences. The Nordic race is that which is preëminent in war, law, politics, exploration, adventure. Spain fell because it wasted its small Nordic population in the wars and conquests of the sixteenth century: this, not the Inquisition, ruined it. Europe to-day is relatively feeble because it has spent its Nordic population in the wars of the past few centuries: everywhere the non-Nordics gain at the expense of the Nordics. It was because the United States was chiefly settled by Nordics from Great Britain, Holland, Germany and France that it was and is still great. In early times only brave and enterprising men crossed the seas: the mass of people stayed at home. But quick travel and easy conditions changed all this, and for two generations a vast non-Nordic population, from central, southern, and eastern Europe and western Asia, has poured into this country.

A few years ago we thought, in our optimism, that we could Nordicize—or Americanize—these aliens by getting them to wave the flag and sing "The Star-Spangled Banner." We thought that reading the Declaration of Independence made Nordics of non-Nordics. We no longer think so, and

the menace of a population unappreciative of Nordic ideals and incapable of working Nordic institutions fills us with grave alarm.

The American people of to-day are no longer adapted to American institutions. Representative government is the supreme fruit of the Nordic race. Because England was the most Nordic of countries, representative government grew to perfection there. We inherited it. But only Ulysses can draw the bow of Ulysses. Our political institutions worked well enough so long as the American people were mainly of one race and had a political class such as the Southern planters to direct them. The government of the United States between 1789 and 1861 was the best the world has ever seen: it was clean, efficient, economical. But when the political class was overthrown, when business men came into the saddle instead of agriculture and the power of the non-Nordic industrial classes began to be felt, the United States declined politically, and the decline has steadily continued. Occasional flurries of reform should not blind us to the fact that we are weaker politically than we were a generation ago and that we grow weaker. The institutions which suited an agricultural community are not fitted to meet the conditions of a great industrial empire. We no longer function properly.

The planters justified their rule by ruling. If they reaped the rewards of government, they did its work. Generally, they did it well. But the men who succeeded them, the financiers and manufacturers, were too busy to govern. They ruled, but through instruments. So the new species of order-taking politicians rose in the land—representatives and employees of special industries. For a time America was governed by these deputies of big business.

But nothing is truer than that in order to govern it is necessary to take the trouble to govern: government is not the realm of absentee landlords. The methods of the business men were crude, their instruments often vile. The land was filled with discontent and scandal, with denunciations of the trusts. Then other politicians arose: demagogues, propagandists, protagonists of salvation by special formulas. These passed, and there came the organized groups, seeking to accomplish particular ends regardless of the will of the people at large and of their welfare. In a country becoming more and more docile and less and less individualistic because ceasing to be Nordic, anything can be accomplished by propaganda and intimidation. Our representatives in Congress really represent little more than special interests of the narrowest sorts: the general principles of government are trampled on in order to attain ends curiously small.

In this political chaos we call modern government one fact stands out in plainest threat—the purpose of the industrial workers, the labor unionists, to control the country politically and economically. These non-Nordics oppose to our outworn Nordic institutions their own naturally communistic organization. They continually grow in power and in boldness. They are the main menace of the future. The prosperity of the United States is colossal, awe-inspiring. But what good will wealth do if we become politically bankrupt? Not money but sound politics is the key of national happiness.

By the whirligig of time, it has come about that the Republican party, industrialist though it be, is the bulwark of Nordic rule in America. It represents the control of the Nordic breed; it occupies the position of defender of conservative institutions that was held by the Democratic party

in 1860. While it predominates, the old republic will continue to exist. Its fall will mean the beginning of revolution. The modern Democratic party, dominated by labor and non-Nordic (except in the South), has become an instrument of economic transformation.

Social revolution is the only end to the conditions under which we live. The Nordics cannot put back the clock—do away with democracy and restore the old natural relation of master and man. The non-Nordics must go on prevailing to the end. They will overthrow the last vestiges of individualism and make some form of communism the order of the nation and probably of the world. We shall follow Russia afar.

This does not mean that we shall have the experiences of Russia; it is probable that we shall not. Our social revolution is likely to be gradual, with only incidental violence. And it is possible that, in the final outcome, the condition of America and of the world will not be worse than at present. It may be better because more stable. Since Nordic institutions are not adapted to modern populations and modern economic conditions, they will go. Our archaic Constitution will be replaced by one more in conformity with modern needs.

We must reconcile ourselves to a dull level of population. There will be no heroes and no miserables. All men will be tolerably efficient. The happiness of the masses may be greater than at any time in the past. Life will be strictly ordered, but men will be compensated by greater security for the loss of individual initiative and personal liberty. War may come to an end because of stable equilibrium. The future of the world may be better than the past. When the great gulf of non-Nordic humanity swallows up the

Nordics, it may be because the master race has done its civilizing work.

But what has Jefferson Davis to do with all this? Much. The Southern Confederacy was, essentially, a protest against modernity. It was an attempt to disregard altruistic ideals and find reality again. It was, above all, the effort of the Nordic race to save itself. If it had succeeded, there would have been a new chapter in history. There would have been a great Nordic empire which might have reached from the Potomac to Cape Horn. All this lay in the womb of the Confederacy.

Success depended, in the last analysis, on Jefferson Davis. He failed. Not from lack of brains, for he had a good mind, and not from want of character, for he was a strong man. But from temperament. He did not have the faculty of success: the power to grapple men to him, absolute self-forgetfulness. So he failed, and with him faded the last hope of the Nordic race.

INDEX

Atchison, David A., urges Douglas to organize territories, 70
Atlanta, fall of, 309

Barnwell, Robert, leader in Nashville convention, 58; works for Davis, 110; declines cabinet post, 124
Bell, John, nominated for President, 93
Benjamin, Judah P., supports Buchanan, 83; Attorney-General, 125-126; sketch of, 136; Secretary of War, 152; Secretary of State, 168
Beauregard, G. P. T., appointed general, 145; plans to attack McDowell, 147; removed from command, 181; blockade, sketch of, 131
Bragg, Braxton, made army commander, 181; invades Kentucky, 183, 185; incompetent for command, 186; fights battle of Murfreesboro, 195; army dissatisfied with, 195; tries himself before officers, 197; supported by Johnston, 198-203; dislikes Johnston, 237; attacks Rosecrans, 246; at feud with his generals, 247; suggests offensive command in order to discredit Johnston, 247-248; in ascendent at Richmond, 279; goes to Atlanta, 302-304
Breckinridge, John C., nominated for President, 93; Secretary of War, 332
Brown, John, raid of, 89
Brown, Governor Joseph, secession leader, 102; opposes Davis, 241; asks for Forrest's cavalry, 296; approached by Sherman, 300
Buchanan, James, cannot take Calhoun's place, 42; won over to annexation of Mexico, 47; minister to England, 66, 67; elected President, 77; policy of in Kansas, 83; leader of Democratic party, 92
Buell, Don Carlos, in Kentucky, 167
Burnside, Ambrose A., defeated at Fredericksburg, 192

Calhoun, John C., aims of, 25; makes treaty with Texas, 27; opposes Mexican War, 41
California, admitted to the Union, 59
Cass, Lewis, originates squatter sovereignty, 52; defeated for President, 54
Chancellorsville, battle of, 213
Charleston, Democratic convention meets at, 92
Chickamauga, battle of, 246
Clay, Henry, arranges Compromise of 1850, 57; genius of, 59
Cleburne, Patrick, suggests enlistment of blacks, 269, 272; at Missionary Ridge, 253; death of, 314
Cobb, Howell, president of secession convention, 2; influence of with Buchanan, 83; secession leader, 102; elected president of convention, 105
Cooper, A. S., appointed general, 145
Cushing, Caleb, confers with Davis, 88; leader in Democratic party, 92

Davis, Jefferson, elected by secession convention, 3; birth of, 29; early education of, 30; goes through West Point, 31; first marriage of, 31; acquires Brier-

field, 32; reading of, 35; management of slaves by, 35; enters politics, 37; second marriage of, 39, leaves Congress for Mexican War, 42; at Monterey, 43; at Buena Vista, 45; enters United States Senate, 46; a nationalist in 1848, 50; seeks to extend Missouri Compromise line to Pacific, 51; becomes a Southern extremist, 55; opposes Compromise of 1850, 58, 61; becomes candidate for governor, 62; becomes a Unionist, 63; Secretary of War, 64, 65; plans Southern expansion, 66; no intriguer, 69; aids Douglas, 73; makes blunder on Kansas-Nebraska bill, 75; on Dred Scott opinion, 80; reënters Senate, 81; sends free-soil soldier to Kansas, 83; Southern leader in Senate, 84, 85; becomes a moderate, 87; tours the North, 88; hatred of for Douglas, 90; works to defeat Douglas for presidency, 92; resolutions of adopted by Charleston platform committee, 93; seeks to induce Douglas to withdraw, 94; counsels delay in secession, 95; resigns from Senate, 97; distrusted by Rhett, 110; why elected President of South, 111; characteristics of, 116-119; reaches Montgomery, 120; selects a cabinet, 123-127; as President in Montgomery, 127; foreign policy of, 134, 135; begins to lose confidence of politicians, 141; influence of Virginia on 144; at First Manassas, 148; decides not to invade North, 153; makes mistakes in 1861, 160; advisers of, 164, 189; inauguration of, 169; social relaxations of, 171; secures draft act, 175; in Seven Days' battle, 179; loses support of politicians, 187; goes West in 1862, 196; puzzled over Bragg, 202; too busy with military details, 211; popularity of wanes, 212; at Jackson's bier, 213; urges Pemberton to hold Vicksburg, 214; wishes t reinforce West, 221; calls cabine conference on Pennsylvania in vasion, 224; fails to help Lee 226; writes Lee, 235; in a foo riot, 240; criticized as unconsti tutional, 242; sends aid to West 245; goes West in 1863, 249; up holds Bragg, 250; to blame fo Missionary Ridge, 254; mistake in Pennsylvania campaign, 258 preference of for trained soldiers 262; gives Johnston command o Western army, 264; refuses t enlist blacks, 273; abandons hop of foreign aid, 289; loses a son 290; religion of, 291; failure of 310; accomplishment of, 311 makes his greatest speech, 325 seeks to enlist blacks, 325; op posed by Congress, 327; make Lee commander in chief, 328 flees from Richmond, 333; im prisonment of, 335; supreme mis take of, 343; good judge of men 345; last political defeat of, 354 qualities of, 355; released from prison, 358

Davis, Joseph Emory, helps Jefferson Davis, 30

Davis, Varina Anne Howell, marries Jefferson Davis, 39; helps her husband, 128

Douglas, Stephen A., introduces Kansas-Nebraska bill, 71; wins over Pierce, 73; becomes unpopular, 77; regains popularity, 82 denounces Buchanan, 83; leader in Senate, 84; only man able to avert secession, 90; nominated for presidency by Baltimore convention, 93; denounces Davis, 94

Dred Scott opinion, announced by Supreme Court, 79; of little value, 90

Early, Jubal A., at Gettysburg, 227 cursing of, 292

Ewell, R. E., at Gettysburg, 227

Foote, Henry S., elected governor of Mississippi, 62; attacks Ben-

jamin in Congress, 168; attacks Davis in Congress, 266; demands surrender, 323
Fort Donelson, surrender of, 167
Fort Sumter, fired on, 138
Franklin, battle of, 314
Fredericksburg, battle of, 192
Fugitive Slave law, passed by Congress, 60; no measure of lower South, 61

Gadsden, James, acquires Gadsden Purchase, 68
Gadsden Purchase, made, 68
Gettysburg, battle of, 227-230; importance of overrated, 234
Gorgas, Josiah, a genius, 350
Grant, U. S., threatens Tennessee, 167; threatens Vicksburg, 204-207; defeats Pemberton, 215; captures Vicksburg, 233; at Missionary Ridge. 253; grand strategy of, 283; in Virginia, 284-288; attacks Petersburg, 286; career of, 333, 334

Hardee, W. J., distrusts Bragg, 107; refuses army command, 263
Hill, A. P., at Gettysburg, 227
Hill, Benjamin H., Unionist leader in Georgia, 102; goes to Richmond for Johnston, 298
Hill, D. H., suspended from his command, 247
Hood, John B., urges Western offensive, 277; Lee's opinion of, 393; becomes army commander, 307; defeated by Sherman, 309; invades Tennessee, 313; retreat of, 315
Hooker, Joseph, attacks Lee, 212
Hunter, R. M. T., leader in Nashville convention, 58; supports Buchanan, 83; member of Senate compromise committee, 96; heads Virginia delegation to Montgomery, 140; friend of Davis, 143; peace commissioner, 324

Jackson, Andrew, refuses to recognize nullification, 26
Jackson, Stonewall, in Valley campaign, 179; at Second Manassas, 182; captures Harper's Ferry, 183; wishes to fight on North Anna, 191; at Fredericksburg, 193; mortally wounded, 213
Johnston, Albert Sidney, appointed general, 145; unpopularity of, 172; death of, 173
Johnston, Herschel V., Unionist leader in Georgia, 102
Johnston, Joseph E., appointed general, 145; fails to pursue McDowell, 150; wounded, 178; made Western departmental commander, 194; supports Bragg, 198-203; in Mississippi, 214; seeks to save Pemberton, 231-233; commander of Western army, 263; fails to invade Tennessee, 277; improves Western army, 292; defensive soldier, 293; retreat of, 294-304; asks for Forrest's cavalry, 296, 297; relieved of command, 306; reappointed to command, 328

Kansas, bill for organization of. 71; South no reason to hope to gain, 75; a country for poor immigrants, 76; struggle for, 78; lost to South, 82
Kennesaw Mountain, fight at, 294

Lee, Robert E., engineer officer in Mexico, 45; appointed general, 145; opposes evacuation of peninsula, 175; made military adviser, 177; army commander, 178; attacks McClellan, 179; at Second Manassas, 182; invades Maryland, 183; at Fredericksburg, 193; frustrates Hooker, 213; fails to read general military problem, 217; should have gone West, 219, 220; persuades Davis to invade North, 221; invades Pennsylvania, 226; why he failed at Gettysburg, 230; offers to resign, 235; in the Wilderness, 284, 285; consulted by Davis, 303; national leader of South, 316; demands negro soldiers, 325,

326; made commander in chief, 328; surrender of, 333
Lincoln, Abraham, elected President, 94; opposes compromise, 96; sketch of, 283; at Hampton Roads Conference, 324
Longstreet, James, at council of war, 175; at Second Manassas, 182; at Gettysburg, 227-229; sent West, 246; criticizes Bragg, 248; detached from Western army, 251
Lyons, James, friend of Davis, 143; confers with Count Mercier, 174

McClellan, George B., advances to Richmond, 177, 178; defeat of in Seven Days' battle, 179
McDowell, Irvin, attacks Beauregard, 148
Mallory, Stephen B., Secretary of Navy, 125; ability of, 349
Marcy, William L., settles with Spain *Black Warrior* matter, 67
Manassas, First battle of, 148
Manassas, Second battle of, 182
Mason, James M., sent as envoy to England, 157-159
Mason, John Y., minister to France, 66, 67
Meade, George Gordon, commands Union army, 226; at Gettysburg, 227
Memminger, Christopher, Secretary of Treasury, 124; financial policy of, 129-132; resigns, 280
Mercier, Count, comes to Richmond, 173
Merrimac, built, 161
Miles, William Porcher, at secession convention, 2
Missionary Ridge, battle of, 253
Missouri Compromise, what it was, 22; Davis seeks to extend to Pacific, 51; repeal of, 72
Montgomery, secession convention at, 1; deputies meet at, 103; Davis's reception at, 127
Murfreesboro (Stone's River), battle of, 195
Myers, Quartermaster-General, upheld by Congress, 269

Napoleon III embarrasses England, 133; brought over to Southern side, 159
Nashville, battle of, 315
Nebraska, bill for organization of, 71; not contested by South, 74
New Mexico, in Compromise of 1850, 60
Northrop, Commissary-General, 266, 268; ability of, 346

Oregon, struggle over organization of, 51; contest over weakens alliance of West and South, 53
Ostend Manifesto, what was, 67

Pemberton, John C., sketch of, 204; defeated, 215; resolves to hold Vicksburg, 216; surrenders, 233
Pierce, Franklin, makes Davis a cabinet officer, 64
Polk, James K., elected President, 27; seeks to gain Texas and Oregon, 40; accepts treaty with Mexico, 49
Polk, Leonidas, distrusts Bragg, 197; suspended from his command, 247
Pope, John, defeated in Virginia, 182
Prentiss, Sargent, beats Davis for legislature, 38; eulogizes Davis, 45
Price, Sterling, in Missouri, 156

Quitman, John A., opposes Compromise of 1850, 58; runs for governor of Mississippi, 62; filibusters in Cuba, 68

Randolph, George Washington, Secretary of War, 174
Reagan, John H., Postmaster-General, 125; opposes invasion of North, 225
Rhett, Robert Barnwell, Calhoun's lieutenant, 40; on slavery in territories, 52; hails Davis a comrade, 55; sketch of, 56; leader in Nashville convention, 58; character of, 59; prevision of, 87; foreign policy of, 134

Richmond, view of, 141; at end of Confederacy, 330

Scott, Sir Walter, influence of on South, 11
Seddon, James A., Secretary of War, 188; sketch of, 190; induces Davis to send Johnston West, 194; correspondence with Johnston, 199-201; seeks to reinforce West, 221; sends aid to West, 245; resigns, 330
Seven Days, battle of, 179
Seven Pines, battle of, 178
Seward, William H., leader in Senate, 84; defeats Confederate diplomacy, 160
Sharpsburg (Antietam), battle of, 184
Sherman, William T., advances, 292-294; sends message to Brown and Stephens, 300; takes Atlanta, 309; marches to sea, 312
Shiloh, battle of, 172
Slidell, John, leader in Democratic party, 92; sent as envoy to France, 157-159
Smith, Gustavus W., at council of war, 153
Smith, Kirby, invades Kentucky, 183, 185; does not aid Pemberton, 233
Soulé, Pierre, minister to Spain, 66, 67
Spotsylvania, battle of, 285
Stephens, Alexander H., leader in Congress, 57; Unionist leader in Georgia, 102; unfortunate influence of, 105; secures Confederate constitution, 107; elected Vice President, 114; approached by Sherman, 300; vagaries of, 320-324; imprisonment of, 325

Taylor, Zachary, father-in-law of Davis, 31; reconciled to Davis, 43; elected President, 54
Texas, great issue in politics, 25; claims Rio Grande as boundary, 40
Thomas, G. H., defeats Hood, 314
Toombs, Robert W., absent from Congress in crisis, 75; supports Buchanan, 83; member of Senate compromise committee, 96; secession leader, 102; fails to rise to occasion, 105; presidential candidate, 109; hears of Davis's election, 111; sketch of, 112; Secretary of State, 124; opposes firing on Sumter, 139; criticizes Davis, 142
Trist, Nicholas, makes peace treaty with Mexico, 49
Tyler, John, part of in acquiring Texas, 25

Utah, in Compromise of 1850, 59

Vance, Governor Zebulon, opposes Davis, 239
Vicksburg, campaign of, 214-216; surrender of, 233-235

Walker, Leroy Pope, Secretary of War, 123
Walker, Robert J., part of in acquiring Texas, 25, 27; slanders Davis, 38; urges annexation of Mexico, 47; aims of disappointed, 49
Walker, William, in Nicaragua, 68
Webster, Daniel, assists Compromise of 1850, 57
Wigfall, Louis A., opposes Davis, 187; Davis's enemy in Congress, 320
Wilderness, battle of, 285
Wilmot Proviso, launched in Congress, 47; what it was, 48; North holds to, 57; abandoned by North, 60

Yancey, William L., Calhoun's lieutenant, 41; hails Davis a comrade, 55; leader of tropic Nordics, 56; leader in Nashville convention, 58; withdraws from Charleston convention, 93; absence of felt in Confederate convention, 105; presidential candidate, 109; sent to Europe, 123; death of, 238

RET'D JUL 6 1987

RET'D MAR 11 1988

APR 5 1990

DEC 17 1996

APR 28 2006

E487.E2 1930
Jefferson Davis, President of the South
3 0629 0231460 9
E
487
E2
1930